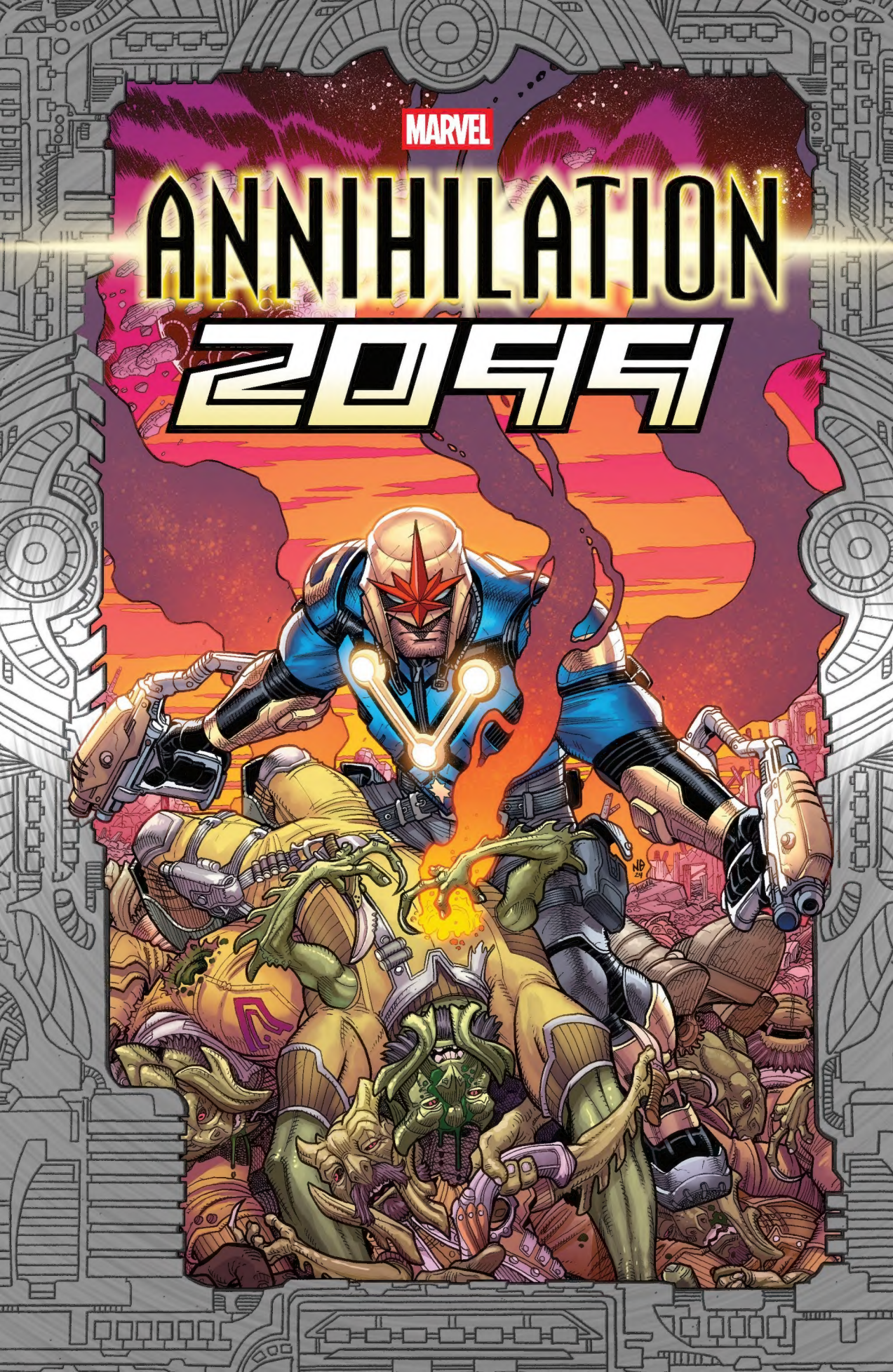
MARVEL
ANNIHILATION
2099

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STEVE ORLANDO
WRITER

"THE LAST NOVA"
ARTIST: IBRAIM ROBERSON
COLOR ARTIST: NEERAJ MENON

"THE TYRANT STAR!"
PENCILER: JOSÉ LUIS SOARES
INKER: OREN JUNIOR
COLOR ARTIST: ARIF PRIANTO

"THE RAGE REBORN"
ARTIST: PETE WOODS

"A TRAGICAL HISTORY..."
ARTIST: ARIO ANINDITO
COLOR ARTIST: JAY DAVID RAMOS

"DRACULA RISEN" PARTS 1-4 & "UNDEAD OR ALIVE!"
ARTIST: DALE EAGLESHAM
COLOR ARTIST: RAÚL ANGULO

VC's CORY PETIT
LETTERER

NICK BRADSHAW & RACHELLE ROSENBERG
COVER ART

MIKEY J. BASSO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

MARK PANICCIA
EDITOR

COLLECTION EDITOR: DANIEL KIRCHHOFFER
TALENT RELATIONS SPECIALIST: LISA MONTALBANO
DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS: JENNIFER GRÜNWALD
VP, PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS: JEFF YOUNGQUIST
BOOK DESIGNER: STACIE ZUCKER
MANAGER & SENIOR DESIGNER: ADAM DEL RE
LEAD DESIGNER: JAY BOWEN
VP, PRINT & DIGITAL PUBLISHING: DAVID GABRIEL
SR. MANAGER, DIGITAL: TIM SMITH 3
DIGITAL PRODUCTION: MEGHAN O'LEARY & RACHEL YOUNG
EDITOR IN CHIEF: C.B. CEBULSKI

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ENCRYPTED INTERNOLOG ACTIVE. NEUROSKELETAL RECORDING ON. SUBJECT--CODENAME: NOVA.
LATELY, XANDAR FEELS LIKE A LIFETIME AGO, AN' STILL TOO RECENT TO FORGET.
AFTER THAT, 'BOUT THE ONLY THING LEFT WAS ME...ME AN' THE CODE.
"PEACE AND ORDER AREN'T THE NATURAL STATE OF THINGS. THEY HAD TO BE INVENTED, AND THEY HAVE TO BE CONSTANTLY DEFENDED."
SPENT A LOT OF TIME THINKIN' ON THOSE WORDS, AN' FINALLY...

...FIGURED I'D TAKE 'EM ON THE ROAD.
REALITY-2099.
THE PLANET ORNN.
THE TOWN OF SUREGASH.
GOT THE FEELIN' THAT AIN'T YOURS, FRIEND.
SO WHAT, COP? I KNOW THAT SYMBOL-- THERE'S NOTHING BACKING UP THAT BADGE!
HERE'S SOMETHIN'.
VRRRM
FINE! DAMN RAIDERS COULD TAKE ME ANY DAY AS IT IS!
SURE SENT HIM RUNNIN', STRANGER. YOU GOT A NAME?
CHECK THE HELMET, KID. NAME'S NOVA.
I'M ILZA. I RUN THIS FRUIT STY--HAVE BEEN SINCE MY PARENTS GOT CAUGHT DEAD IN A RAID.
FOLKS IN SUREGASH AIN'T KNOWN TO STICK THEIR NECKS OUT.
YOU GOT MY THANKS.
SAVE 'EM. I'LL TAKE DIRECTIONS...

"...TO THE NEAREST BAR."
STEAL A SEAT, THIRSTY TRAVELER! TODAY...

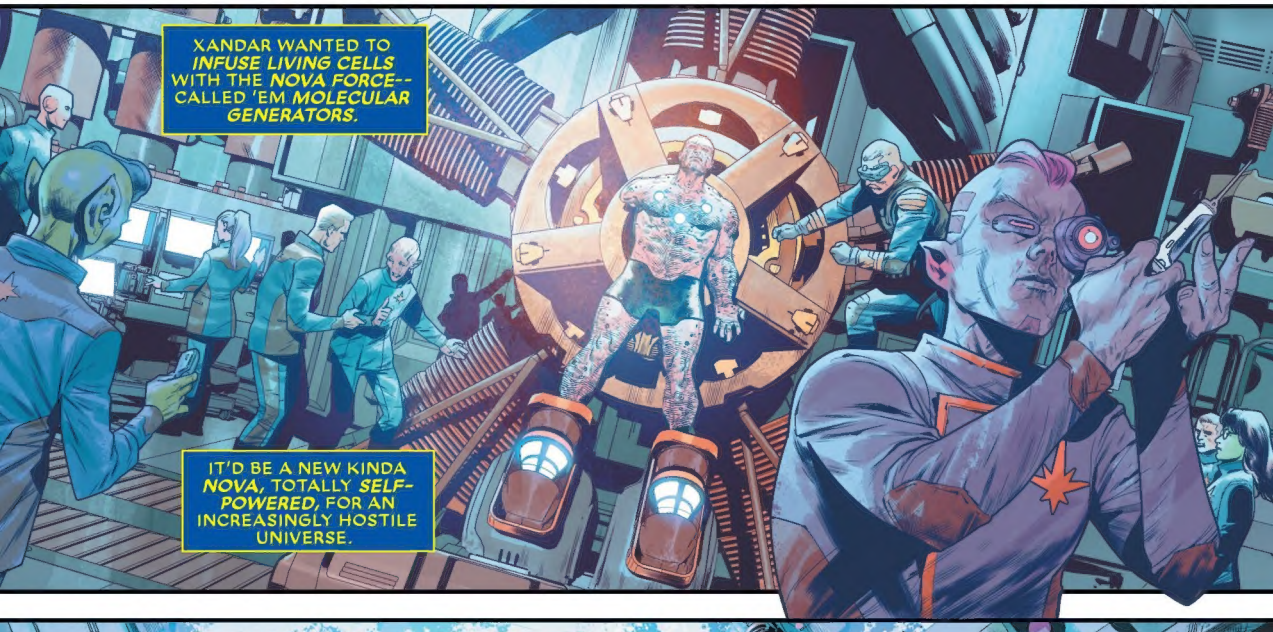
...WE'RE POURING BLUE WHISKEY, BARN-DISTILLED FROM FINE HIGH-GRAVITY CENTAURIAN WHEAT.
AS HOOCHES GO, IT'LL STERILIZE A SKRULL LATRINE. PERFECT SIP FOR A MAN IN MOURNING.

GUESS I GOT THE LOOK, AN' SHE'S RIGHT...

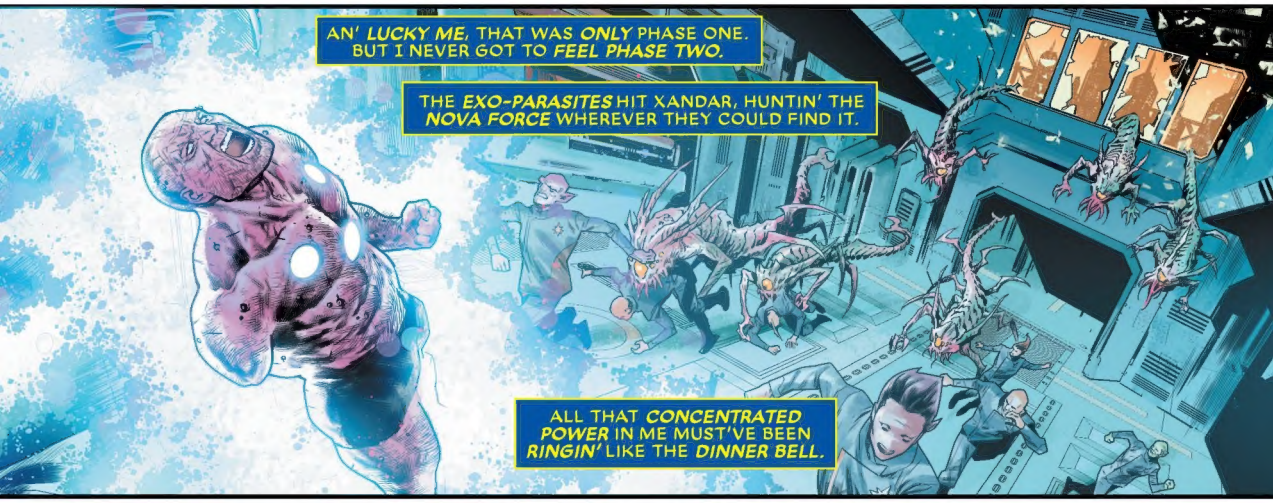
...CARRYIN' PLENTY IN MY HEART. XANDAR SHOULD'VE BEEN A NEW BEGINNIN'.
BUT THE EXO-PARASITES WEREN'T KEEN TO HONOR MY PLANS.
DAMN BUGS BORED IN FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, SUCKED DOWN A REMOTE SENTRY.

GGYEEAAAAUUUUUUU...
GOT A TASTE OF THE NOVA FORCE AN' WANTED MORE. BAD FATE, I GUESS.
'CAUSE RIGHT AS THEY SET SNOOT ON XANDAR FOR THEIR NEXT MEAL...

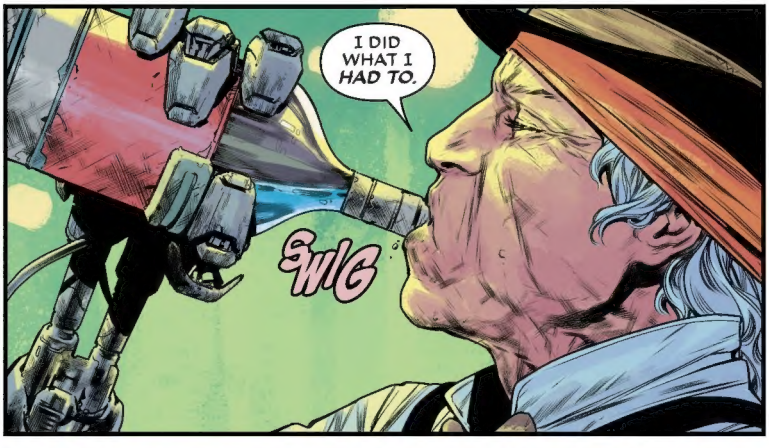
...I WAS HEADIN' THERE FOR A FRESH START. I BEEN HIT BAD IN MY DAY. HIT PLENTY.
THE HULKS TOOK AN EYE AND AN ARM. MIGHTA BEEN THE GAMMA, THE THIRD, WEIRD KIND...
...BUT THE WOUNDS JUST WOULDN'T MEND. THE NOVA CORPS SAID THEY'D HELP.
HAD A NEW PROGRAM STARTIN' UP, AN' THEY NEEDED A LAB RAT. I SIGNED ON.


XANDAR WANTED TO INFUSE LIVING CELLS WITH THE NOVA FORCE-- CALLED 'EM MOLECULAR GENERATORS.
IT'D BE A NEW KINDA NOVA, TOTALLY SELF-POWERED, FOR AN INCREASINGLY HOSTILE UNIVERSE.

AN' I'LL TELL YA, I FELT THE POWER. AVERAGE PERSON'S GOT 37 TRILLION CELLS, RIGHT?
THE SECOND THEY HIT THAT SWITCH, I HAD 37 TRILLION TINY SUNS UNDER MY SKIN.


AN' LUCKY ME, THAT WAS ONLY PHASE ONE. BUT I NEVER GOT TO FEEL PHASE TWO.
THE EXO-PARASITES HIT XANDAR, HUNTIN' THE NOVA FORCE WHEREVER THEY COULD FIND IT.
ALL THAT CONCENTRATED POWER IN ME MUST'VE BEEN RINGIN' LIKE THE DINNER BELL.

THEM *BUGS* NEARLY GOT THEIR *FILL.*



...LIKE I SAID, THE BUGS DIDN'T *QUITE* GET THEIR *FILL*, BUT THEY TRIED.
THEY *INFECTED* 'EM ALL. EVERY *CITIZEN*, EVERY *CENTURION*, EVERY *DENARIAN*, EVERY *MILLENNIAN*.
EVERY *NOVA CORPSMAN*. EVERY LIVING THING ON *XANDAR*...EXCEPT *ME*.
EXCEPT THE MEAL THEY WANTED *MOST*. THE MAN WITH THE *NOVA FORCE* IN HIS *VEINS*.
FIGURE MY KNACK FOR *HEALIN'*, JUICED BY THE NOVA FORCE, MADE ME HARD TO *INFECT*.

BUT I WAS *ALONE* IN THAT. AN' THE *INFECTION* COULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO SPREAD.
THE *EXO-PARASITES* HAD TO BE STOPPED. SO I DID WHAT I HAD TO, TO *EVERYONE* ON XANDAR.
TO *SAVE* THE GALAXY...

...I BURIED AN ENTIRE WORLD
ANOTHER?
KRAAAASH
OUTTA MY WAY!
IS IT--IS IT THEM?
THUD
KRUNCH
GET OUTTA HERE! JUST GO! AN' WATCH YER EYES!
THEY AIN'T NEVER TAKEN NO ONE ALIVE!
KRANGH
KRACHOOM
BIT 'A COMMOTION OUT THERE.
FLIK
HAVE A LOOK, SUREGASH! TAKE ONE LAST PEEK!
CAST THOSE EYES ON YER LOVER, YER BROTHER, OR YER MOTHER...

...'CAUSE THE KNULL SET'S HERE TO CLOSE 'EM FOREVER!
GWAUGH!
APPRECIATE THE SNACK, MISTER MAYOR. TWO MORE EYES FER THE VOID KING.
AS THE DARK DEMANDS.

GAH! LEMME GO, YA *MAD FOOL!* LEMME GO AN' *RUN!*
THINK I'LL *STAY.* BUT *YOU* CAN RUN...
...*AFTER* YOU TELL ME 'BOUT *THOSE RAIDERS.* WHAT THE HELL'S THE *KNULL SET?*
THEY RIDE AS THEY PLEASE! COLLECTIN' EYES-- COLLECTIN' *DARK* FER THEIR *OLD GOD...*
"TIME WAS, THEY WERE LOCAL *PROSPECTORS.* THEM AN' THEIR CAPTAIN, *MURK.*
"ONE NIGHT, YEARS BACK, THEY *RIDE OUT* TO RECONNOITER A *METEORITE...*"
...COME BACK *DIFFERENT.* OBSESSED WITH THE *DARK. DESTRUCTION MINDED.*
ONLY *WAGES* THEY TAKE NOW'S *DEATH.* ONLY *LOOT* THEY SEEK'S THE NEXT SET OF *EYES.*
AIN'T STOPPED KILLIN' US YET, AN' THEY'RE *HOT* TA TAKE THEIR *PARTY OFF-WORLD.*
DAMN *THIEVES*...YER *TRASH,* NOTHIN' BUT...
HELL OF A MOUTH ON YA... BUT IT AIN'T YER *GOB* THE *VOID KING* WANTS.

IT AIN'T *YER KING* I'M WORRIED ABOUT PLEASIN'.

SO WHAT, COP?!
WE GOT A DUTY TO DESTROY-- AS THE DARK DEMANDS!
PAC HOK
TOUGH TALK THAT'LL BE CAPTAIN MURK-- JUST LIKE THE DRUNK SAID
QUICK TO SPILL BLOOD, EVEN QUICKER TO JUSTIFY IT
THAT'S A HUNGER I KNOW ALL TOO WELL
HELL, IT'S THE STAR OF MY NIGHTLY NIGHTMARE
PTOO
HUNGER LIKE THAT DIGS INTO YOUR HEART IT NEVER GOES AWAY
UNTIL SOMEONE MAKES IT GO AWAY
SEEN YOUR LIKE TOO MANY TIMES, MURK. PEACE N' ORDER JUST AIN'T YOUR NATURAL STATE.
THING IS-- DEFENDIN' 'EM IS 'BOUT ALL I GOT LEFT. PUTS US AT CROSS PURPOSES, DON'T IT?

NOT FER LONG-- SHRED 'IM GOOD, BOYS!
ZAPCHOK
ZAPCHOK
SIZZZZZL
I'M WAITIN'.
THAT LIGHT! SHOOTIN' MY GUNHANDS IS BAD ENOUGH--YA GOTTA BLASPHEME?!
A LIGHT LIKE THAT DISRESPECTS THE VOID KING. GETS ME INSPIRED TOO.
THE KING'S TITHE'S GOTTA BE PAID. I ONLY HAD TO SEND A FEW SOULS TO THE DARK TODAY...
...BUT NOW HERE YOU ARE! AN' I'M THINKIN' THE KING'LL TAKE REAL KINDLY TA OL' MURK...
...FOR KILLIN' A NOVA'S SHINE.

AS THE DARK DEMANDS!
FORGET MY HEAD, MURK.
MY HANDS'RE WHAT YOU SHOULD BE WATCHIN'.
ZBAM
NICE SHOT. HURT BUT GOOD-- BUT HURT AIN'T KILLED. SEE, I'M A TRUE BELIEVER.
MY GUNHANDS? THEY PRAISED THE CAUSE, THEY DRESSED IN DARK...

...BUT MURK LIVES IT, BODY AND SOUL!
HOPE YOU'RE READY TO DIE FOR IT.
VRRRM

AGHK-- YA SHOCKIN' HERETIC!
DEATH RELIGION'S YOUR THING, MURK...
SSSLERIKT
...ALL I FOLLOW'S THE CODE. AN' LIKE IT OR NOT?
KRAK
THAT PUTS ME BETWEEN YOU AND THE FINE FOLK OF SUREGASH.
PROKTCH
FAIR 'NUFF. HAPPY TO GO THROUGH YA!
NOVA!
ILZA?! GET THE HELL BACK AN' HIDE, KID! I'LL BE--
--FFINPH.
CHUG CHUG CHUG
SHOULDN'T BLINK, COP...

...THAT'S HOW THE DARK GETS IN!
UMPPHH!!!
"AN' IT ALWAYS GETS IN. DIDN'T TAKE LONG FER ME. ME N' MY CREW...
"...WE SET OUT TA STAKE OUR CLAIM ON SOME PRECIOUS METALS FROM THE SKY.
"PRECIOUS ENOUGH THAT SPLITTIN' THREE WAYS WAS BETTER 'N FIVE.
"BUT IT WEREN'T NO METEORITE. IT WAS A SYMBIOTE. IT CALLED TA US--TA ME.
"SAID WE'D BE PRECIOUS, WE'D BE VALUED LIKE NO OTHER...
"...LONG AS WE SPREAD THE WORD 'A KNULL. THE KING OF DARKNESS.
"KNULL WAS DEAD, BUT FAITH LOVES A MARTYR. AN' THAT SYMBIOTE DUG IN DEEP.
"SINCE THAT DAY, WE BEEN TURNIN' OFF THE LIGHTS FOR AS MANY AS WE CAN..."

...AS THE DARK DEMANDS!

MURK, HE...HE POPPED THAT NOVA LIKE A RIPE FRUIT. AN' WE'RE NEXT!
YA HEARD 'IM! RUN!

POK
NOT SMART, ILZA GIRL...TIME TA JOIN YER FAMILY IN DEATH.
DO YER WORST, MURK. THIS TOWN CAN TURN TAIL...BUT MY PARENTS DIDN'T GO EASY.
AN' NEITHER WILL I.

YOUR PARENTS WENT SCREAMIN', CRYIN', AN' DRIBBLIN' DOWN THEIR LEGS. THEY BEGGED...
...RIGHT TILL THEY WENT DARK ON ACCOUNT A ME SUCKIN' OUT THEIR BRAINS N' EYES.
FOLKS'RE RIGHT TA FEAR THE DARKNESS, KID. AIN'T NOTHIN' THAT CAN STOP IT.

SNIKT

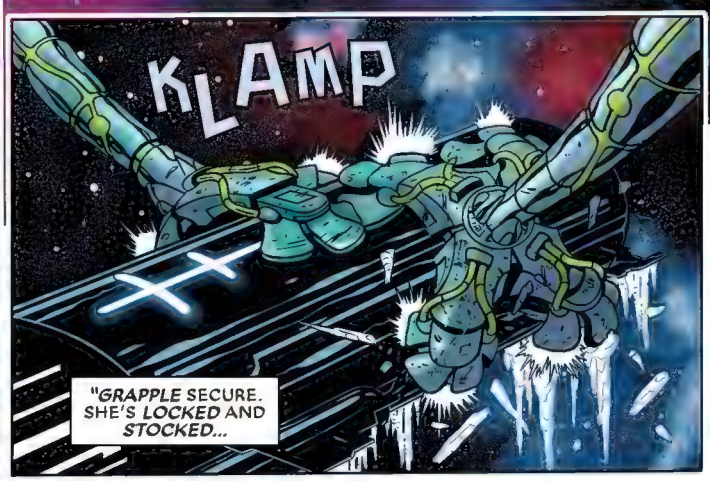
SNIKT

HOW 'BOUT THESE?!
SLUK!
YOU--BUT YOU WERE DEAD! FULL-ON TENDERIZED...
I HEAL FAST, RUNT.
THAT'S QUITE THE GIFT.
UNTIL IT AIN'T.
NOW STAND BACK.
WITHOUT MY GUNS, WITHOUT MY GEAR...
...THE NOVA FORCE AIN'T EXACTLY EASY TO KEEP A LID ON.
UZZRRM

ZZZZZZRAKT
HEY--
HEY!
GUESS YA DON'T HEAL *THAT FAST!*
FAST ENOUGH.
LIKE HELL. YER *BANGED UP* GOOD--ALL FOR *FIGHTIN' OUR FIGHT* FOR US.
AIN'T NEVER BEEN GOOD AT *WALKIN' AWAY.*
TOWN'S ONLY *BREATHIN'* 'CAUSE OF YOU. AN' WE DON'T EVEN KNOW YER NAME--*NOT REALLY.*
NOVA IS THE NAME. THE ONLY ONE THAT *COUNTS.* BUT BACK IN THE *AGE...*

...FOLKS CALLED ME LOGAN.
I DO HATE WALKIN' AWAY. BUT I GOT TO BE MOVIN' ON.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S NOT BUT ONE OF US LEFT. ONE SOLDIER WITH A HEAVY DOSE OF BLOOD ON HIS HANDS.
ONE GUNHAND TO ROAM THE STARS, INVENTIN' PEACE N' ORDER WHERE THERE'S NONE.
AN' WHEREVER THOSE OLD-FASHIONED IDEAS ARE FOUND?
ONE LAST NOVA TO DEFEND 'EM.
THE END.

"DRACULA RISEN"
PART I



"...I'M REELING HER IN."
NICE BIT OF WRANGLIN', BLOODEYE.
IF THERE'S ANY LUCK IN THEM STARS, THIS SCORE'LL BUY US A FEW CYCLES OF THE GOOD LIFE.
CREW MANIFEST
PTAIN: SKRETCH.
IRST MATE: PEILADJ.
ECOVERY: MOORN BLOODEYE.
NAVIGATION: YOBIDZA.
MECHANIC: K'DERN.
PORT OF CALL: GHOUL PLANET.
PORT OF CALL: ALL-SKRULLOS.
PORT OF CALL: MOORD.
PORT OF CALL: SAKAAR.
PORT CALL: PRAETOR-CHANDILAR.

SMELLS OLD. SMELLS EXPENSIVE... SMELLS LIKE SHE'S WAITIN' TO BE CRACKED OPEN.
SNIIIRRRFFF
K'DERN.
MOST ASSUREDLY, CAPTAIN SKRETCH.
JUST LET ME WORK IN THE ELECTRO-WEDGE, AND...
SPARK-RAK
GOD'S LOINS-- GAH!
POHP
STOW THE INVOCATIONS, MOORN. YOU'RE THE SCAVENGER-- WHAT'VE WE GOT?
NOTHING GOOD, CAPTAIN. THIS CARGO HAS ALL THE HALLMARKS OF TROUBLE.
TROUBLE NETS US DOUBLE. YOBIDZA-- WHERE'D THIS JETSAM COME FROM?
FAR OFF. THERE'S THE WET-STONE STINK OF DEAD MOON ALL ABOUT THIS ONE.
COULD BE THE ORKASTRA SYSTEM. COULD BE SOL. MAYBE EVEN--
COULD BE ANYWHERE, SOUNDS LIKE. OKAY, ONE SIDE.
THE CAPTAIN'S TAKIN' A LOOK FOR HIMSELF--

REACH!
WE'RE BREACHED! LOSING ATMOSPHERE!
DAMN. STATIC DISCHARGE BLEW A HOLE IN THE HULL
Fwoooosh
SKRETCH'S DEAD--
...WE'RE PUNCTURED AS A LUNG!

--GET TO THE PANIC VALVE! LOCAL GRAVITY'S ALREADY GOT US!
SEAL THAT BREACH BEFORE WE CRASH! SOMEONE GET TO THE--
SKREEEEEEEEEEEE
AGHD! WHAT ARE THESE BEASTS?!
SKREET
SKREET
SKREET
SKREET
EVERYWHERE-- THAT'S WHAT! AND THE VACUUM'S GOT NO HOLD ON THEM!
CHIKT
CHIKT
CHIKT
CHIKT
AAAGHD! SHOCKING THINGS BITE!
THEY'RE UNDER MY SCALES! GET THEM OFF GET THEM OFF GET THEM--
SKREEEEEEEEEE
WAIT...WHY RETREAT? THEY HAD US--
--OFF?
HUAAAAAGH!
RETREAT? NO. THEY WERE CALLED. THEY RETURN TO THE HOME FLESH.
TO THE CURSED FORM OF THEIR MAKER. TO THE BLOOD AND BODY...

...OF
DRACULA!

WHAT A STRANGE PLACE TO WAKE. AND UNREASONABLY WINDY.
THERE.
SSSHUNT
FWOOOOOZZZH
HOW NICE THAT NATURE STILL ACKNOWLEDGES ITS MASTER.
AND WHAT AN UNEXPECTED TURN... MY DESTINATION WAS SET--I AWAITED A NEW CHAPTER. AND YET...
...I SENSE NONE OF MY KIND BELOW. I FEEL NO OCEAN TIDES OF BLOOD.
THIS IS NOT THE VAMPIRE HOMEWORLD.

THIS RUSTIC DIRTBALL CANNOT BE DOMUS DRACONUM.*
SO...I AM LOST, THEN. I AM FAR FROM HOME.
*SEE MIGUEL O'HARA - SPIDER-MAN 2099 #2 FOR DRACULA'S QUEST. --SPACE PIRATE PANICCIA

BUT A VAMPIRE IS RARELY ALONE FOR LONG. HEAR MY WORDS IN YOUR HEAD...
...ACCEPT THE HIDDEN VOICE OF OUR PEOPLE. KNOW THAT WE ARE NOW KIN.

WELCOME YOUR NEW STATIONS...
MOORN BLOODEYE OF MOORD...NOW GRAVEHUNTER, CAPTAIN OF THE RAID.
K'DERN OF PRAETOR-CHANDILAR...NOW NIGHT FORGE, CAPTAIN OF THE SMITHY.
PEILADJ OF ALL-SKRULLOS... NOW DEATHFORM, CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT.
YOBIDZA OF SAKAAR...NOW KILLPATH, CAPTAIN OF THE TRAIL.
EACH OF YOU IS REBORN IN MY BLOOD. NONE CAN DEFY ME. AND ALL OF YOU...
...WILL MAKE FINE CAPTAINS IN THE WORLD TO COME.
WE ARE DESTINED FOR A NEW HOME...AND WE WILL NOT BE DENIED!

BUT, LORD DRACULA--WHY SPEAK OF HOME, WHY GRANT US THE DARK GIFT...
...WHEN DOOM LOOMS SO NEAR?!
OUR SHIP IS CRITICALLY DAMAGED. WE ARE STILL CRASHING.
THAT WE ARE. BUT WORRY NOT--MORTAL DEATH HOLDS NO SWAY OVER YOU NOW.
YOU ARE REBORN BY THE STRONGEST VAMPIRE BLOOD IN HISTORY...
...YOU NEED NOT FEAR OUR FALL.
KNEEL, MY CAPTAINS.
KNEEL, AND PREPARE TO MAKE PURCHASE ON AN UNTAMED SHORE.
ANY PAIN WILL BE BRIEF, BUT ONCE WE'VE MADE LANDFALL...

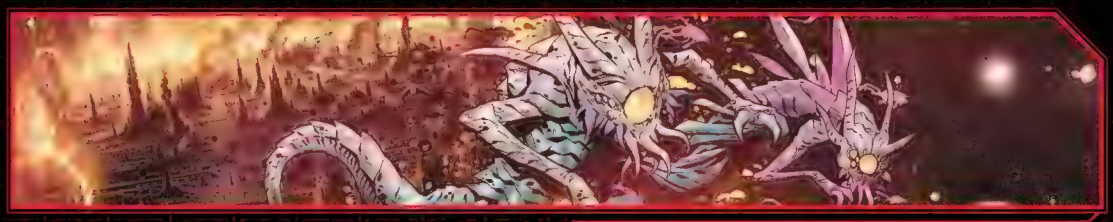
...OUR WRECK WILL BECOME A BEACON!
SOME WILL COME FOR PROFIT. SOME TO PILLAGE. AND SOME TO BRING AID.
BUT ALL WHO SEEK OUR VESSEL WILL RESPECT ITS TRUE CARGO...
"...OR DIE AT OUR HANDS."
HAHAHAHAH
HAHAHAH
HAHAHAH

NOVA CORPS INTELLIGENCE
EMERGENCY STORAGE

ATOMIC KEY UNLOCKED
DATA SUPER-COMPRESSION PAUSED

FILE: EXO-PARASITES

Native to Exo-Space, alternatively defined as the Neutral Zone, a buffer plane between realities. While their origins remain unconfirmed, they exist beyond even the Superflow. Theories cite Exo-Parasites as one of the most infectious predatory concepts in the cosmos, scavengers who may have once fed solely on universal carrion. However, in the common era, their voracious nature has driven them to pierce the membrane between realities in search of new beings and fuels, such as our Nova Corps and, indeed, the very Nova Force itself, upon which to feed. Cosmohistorians hypothesize that Exo-Parasite encounters have inspired interdimensional horror narratives on multiple worlds, including Earth, Chandilar, and Orkastra-1.



FILE: KNULL

By claim and action, a creature of primordial dark, of nothingness. Cosmohistorians theorize Knull, also known as the God of Symbiotes and the King in Black, to have originated in the Ginnungagap, the void existing between the sixth and seventh expressions of creation itself. While contemporary technology lacks the ability to confirm Knull's true origins, they are consistently supported by aligning folkloric narratives throughout the universe. While Knull was seemingly destroyed in Earth's 21st century after a near-total conquest of the world, rumors of his influence and continued worship persist throughout the known systems. While his worshippers take many forms, all are united by a desire to quell any and all light they find, be it in the eyes of living beings or the stars above.

FILE: HOWLETT, JAMES A.K.A. LOGAN

Born in Earth's 19th century, James Howlett would grow to become first the mutant wanderer known as Logan and then the mutant warrior known as Wolverine. During Earth's 20th and 21st centuries, Howlett became a fixture of war—both earthbound and intergalactic. As Wolverine, he encountered officers from our own Nova Corps, both Samuel Alexander and Richard Rider. As Earth's heroic age waned, Howlett briefly assumed a leadership position among Earth's mutant population, only to sustain grievous injuries in the temporal conflagration known locally as the Timestorm. With wounds that even his mutant healing factor could not mend, Howlett stepped away from leadership and returned to wandering. Shame or pride has driven him from his community, and he longs to be whole. Howlett's stalled healing factor makes him an ideal candidate for Xandar's burgeoning Supercorps program—the process of turning cells themselves into Nova Force generators would overcome most humanoids. Howlett's healing gifts, even diminished, may allow him to survive the procedure. And once imbued with the Nova Force itself, his body's own natural healing should be jump-started. Howlett's situation makes him vulnerable. And if successful, his rebirth as our first Supercorps officer will yield positive returns for both him and the Nova Corps alike.

FILE: SKRETCH, CAPTAIN TORNISH

A peripheral intergalactic scavenger, Captain Tornish Skretch holds no actual military rank confirmed by anything but his boasts. Skretch claims Ghoul Planet as his homeworld, but the skull-shaped planetoid has no native species. As such, while he was born on one of the galaxy's most infamous ports of call for pirates and scoundrels, his species itself has yet to be identified. Raised on Ghoul Planet, Skretch lives by the space pirate's code. He travels the dark corners of space, salvaging and scavenging what he can from the wreck of the galaxy's great wars. Even the Skeleton Crew, who work on Skretch's ship, is scavenged itself, drawn from once-great empires in decline. Data is incomplete, but he is rumored to travel with subordinates of Badoon, Shi'ar, and even Skrull blood. With the Nova Corps alone, Skretch shoulders outstanding warrants for piracy, trespassing, fraud, burglary, and unlicensed necromantic practices. He is a fugitive to the Autocron Imperium as well as the nomadic Epsiloni Horde. If captured and convicted, he stands to face multiple Xandar-Standard life sentences.

ORKASTRA-1.
THE ORKASTRA SYSTEM.
GO-- GET OFF THE STREETS! NOW!
THEN WHAT?! WHERE--HOW DO YOU HIDE FROM THE SKY?!
THERE'S STILL TIME, DUKE. THE DUCAL SKIFF COULD GET YOU OFF-WORLD. TO ORKASTRA-2, MAYBE--
NO. THERE'S NO ESCAPING WHAT'S COMING. THE GRAVITY ALONE WOULD PULP ANY LIFEBOAT.
YOU'VE SERVED WELL, ARCHDUKES. WITH LOVE AND GOOD COUNSEL...
RRRRRUU
UMMBLE
...BUT THIS DAY HAS LONG HUNG OVER OUR HEADS. AND IT'S COME AT LAST.

"THE DAY HE GREW TIRED OF US."

ORKASTRA-2.
HOURS LATER.
DID YOU SEE?! ORKASTRA-1 JUST *RUPTURED!* THE *CAPITAL WORLD'S* SPACE ROCK!
WE ALL SAW IT--HELL, THE WHOLE PLANET'S STILL *FEELING* IT!
HEAR US, LIFEGIVER! MAY THE *TELEPROJECTOR* SAFELY DELIVER OUR PRAYERS!
YOU'VE TAKEN ORKASTRA-1! WE ARE NOTHING, YET *STILL WE PRAY...SPARE* ORKASTRA-2!
ORKASTRA-3.
DAYS LATER
THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT'S *ASH*...AND *HE* MAY NOT *STOP* AT *ORKASTRA-1.*
ORKASTRA-2 CAN PRAY! *WE* WON'T BEG OUR DESTROYER FOR MERCY. *STATUS REPORT?*
THE *DISTRESS CALL'S* RINGING OUT *LOUD,* BUT IS ANYONE EVEN LISTENING?
LOSING *ORKASTRA-1* DESTABILIZED THE *SYSTEM.* TIDES, ELECTRO-MAGNETISM, GRAVITY, WEATHER...
...IT'S *ALL* ASKEW. IF NO ONE COMES SOON, THERE WON'T BE MUCH TO *SAVE.*
SOMEONE ORDER A *RESCUE?*

GREETINGS, ORKASTRA-3!
YOUR DISTRESS CALL PINGED MY FLEET.
THE NAME'S STARLORD. INDEPENDENT STELLAR SECURITY...
TELL ME.
HOW CAN I HELP?

INCREDIBLE! THE SIGNAL'S BEEN SCREAMING FOR DAYS--
DAYS OF SILENCE! WE WERE SURE NO ONE WOULD HEAR US!
A PLANET IS DEAD-- THAT'S A TRAGEDY. A COSMIC NATURAL DISASTER.
HOW COULD I IGNORE THAT? HOW COULD ANYONE?
IT WASN'T NATURAL.
ORKASTRA-1 WAS PUNISHED. KILLED FOR NOT PAYING THE SOLAR TITHE IN FULL.
MEANWHILE, ORKASTRA-2 PRAYS FOR FORGIVENESS...
CATCH ME UP. WHO COLLECTS THIS "TITHE"?
...YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, AND YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIM?!
"HIM"?
HIM WHO?
KA
KOM

ORKASTRA-2.
SSSSHZZZZLLL
DON'T RUN, FOOLS! IT'S A TEST OF FAITH! A TEST FROM THE LIFEGIVER--IT MUST BE!
SKY'S ON FIRE, CLERIC... THE TEST IS... IT'S OVER...WE FAILED...
THAT'S ORKASTRA-2! HE'S BURNING IT ALIVE!
THAT'S HIM, STARLORD! THAT'S WHO COLLECTS THE TITHE! THAT'S WHO RULES THIS SYSTEM!
QUASAR... THE LIVING SUN! THE STELLAR TYRANT!

...A DESPOT STAR.
WAIT-- WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
YOUR STELLAR TYRANT'S MURDERED TWO PLANETS--HE WON'T GET A THIRD.
PLEASE UNDERSTAND-- FOR EONS, QUASAR BURNED QUIET. BUT YEARS AGO, HE WOKE TO THOUGHT.
HE BECAME AWARE OF ALL HE GIVES US--LIGHT, POWER, WARMTH. LIFE ITSELF!
WITH AWARENESS CAME ENTITLEMENT. THE NEED FOR PRAISE, FOR HIS TITHE...
...AN OFFERING OF OUR PLANET'S RESOURCES FOR HIM TO DESTROY, JUST AS HE CREATED THEM!
SO MUCH IS NOT RIGHT HERE. STARS AREN'T PETTY. THEY'RE FORCES OF NATURE.
IF QUASAR WILLED IT, HIS GRAVITY, HIS HEAT, HIS RADIATION, COULD KILL US ALL.
WHEN WE SENT OUR CALL, WE EXPECTED AN EVACUATION.
MY SHIP IS ONE OF A FLEET THAT GUARDS STAR SYSTEMS, BUILT ON PLANET WAKANDA.
IT'S VIBRANIUM POWERED, WITH ADAMANTINE PSYCHIC SHIELDS AND CAVORITE ANTI-GRAVITY...
...IT'LL GET ME CLOSE TO QUASAR.
YOU WILL NOT LOSE YOUR PLANET.
YOU HAVE MY WORD.

ON COURSE FOR QUASAR, STARLORD.
THANKS, UMBINGELELI. START LONG-RANGE SCANS. AND CALL ME AMANDLA.
AS YOU LIKE, LORD AMANDLA.
COME ON. LORD'S NOT A TITLE--JUST A NOD TO SOMEONE WHO WAS THERE FOR ME.
APOLOGIES, AMANDLA. SHALL I REDUCE MY BANTER QUOTA?
NAH, KEEPS ME FRESH.
THIS WAS THE CAPITAL WORLD. BILLIONS DEAD...IT'S NOT NATURAL.
SUNS DON'T DEMAND FEALTY. SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH QUASAR.
LET'S ASK. WE'VE REACHED HIS CORONA. I'VE TINTED THE GLASS TO SPARE YOUR HUMAN EYEBALLS.
KIND AS ALWAYS. OKAY--GIVE ME EVERY SCAN WE'VE GOT.
WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE THAT STAR?

SOLAR WIND. GRAVITY FIELDS. FUSION. THE USUAL... EXCEPT FOR AN ANOMALY AT THE CORE.
SOLID. SHIELDED BY ALPHA ENERGY. DESIGN WELL BEYOND UNIVERSAL BASELINE.
DON'T HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT TO BREAK IT. BRING IT UP.
THE ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY'S LIKE A BRAIN...THIS IS WHAT WOKE QUASAR. GOT TO BE.
LOOKS LIKE LABWORLD TECH. BUT WHO CREATED IT IS A QUESTION FOR AFTER ORKASTRA-3'S SAFE.
TAKE THE STICK, UMBINGELELI. I'M GOING UP TOP.
AND KEEP US LEVEL. CAN'T CALL OUT A SUN WITHOUT SURE FOOTING.
I'LL IDLE US, AMANDLA. BUT OUTSIDE THE SHIP, YOU'LL BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO--
MEAGER CREATURE! NONE MAY APPROACH ME UNNOTICED
--TELEPATHY.
BE HOW MY MEREST WHISPER RUMBLES YOU'LL ALL SHUDDER AT THE VOICE OF GOD
YOU... YOU'RE NO GOD, QUASAR...
...YOU'RE JUST MALFUNCTIONING TECHNOLOGY.

BLASPHEMY! I AM THE JEWEL OF STELLAR EVOLUTION!
SEE AGAIN HOW SMALL I MUST BECOME, JUST TO FACE YOU?
JUST TO MEET YOUR GAZE AS YOU BEG FOR YOUR LIFE?
PLEASE. THE SUIT, MY STARHAMMER. IT'S ALL VIBRANIUM--BUCK YOUR GRAVITY.
YOU CAN'T CRUSH ME. STARLORD COMES PREPARED. AND SHE DOESN'T BEG.
SO TALK--WHY ATTACK YOUR WORLDS?
I AM THEIR LIFEGIVER & I AM NOT HONORED. THEY ARE DUE MY WRATH.
RIGHT. THEY EVOLVED ON PLANETS YOU MADE LIVABLE. AND EVOLUTION BROUGHT YOU SENTIENCE.
SO WHY ATTACK? WHY NOT RESPECT EVOLUTION AND LEAVE YOUR PEOPLE IN PEACE?
I SLEPT FOR BILLIONS OF YEARS. I WILL BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED NO LONGER.

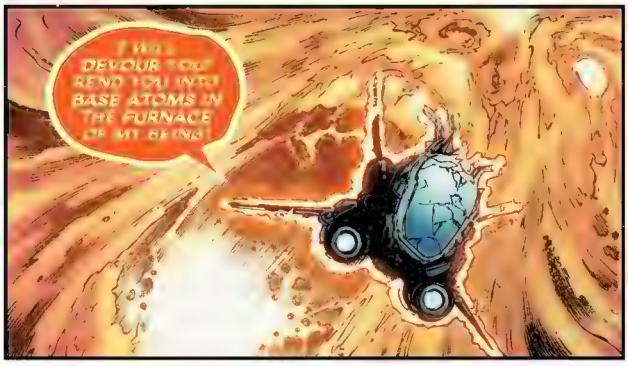
...NOT BY MY WORLDS' BRIEF BEINGS, AND NOT BY YOU.
I AM A SUN. I FUEL EVOLUTION. I NEED NOT RESPECT IT.
IF YOU EVOLVED LIKE YOU SAY, WHO REIGNS OVER YOU? YOU'RE ALMOST SEEING IT.
MAKING SOMETHING, CREATING LIFE, DOESN'T MEAN YOU OWN IT. YOU'LL GET THAT...
...ONCE YOU FIGURE OUT SOMEONE CREATED YOU.
SEE THIS? IT'S THE DEVICE AT THE HEART OF YOUR CORE.
THIS ISN'T EVOLUTION, QUASAR. IT'S MAD SCIENCE.
IT'S DEBRIS-- NOTHING MORE!
ORKASTRA-1 DIED FOR BELLIGERENCE. ORKASTRA-2 FOR SHAMEFUL SELF-DEBASEMENT.
AND STILL, I HOLD DOMINION OVER BILLIONS OF LIVES
NOW, FOR DISCOUNTING MY VERY BEING... YOU WILL WATCH AS I SLAY ORKASTRA-3.
KZMM
YEAH.

THAT DOESN'T WORK FOR ME.
YOU ARE NOT COSMIC DUST TO ME!
BEEN CALLED WORSE BY BETTER.
YOU CHALLENGE A SUN ITSELF, FOR BEINGS YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW!
WHY?!

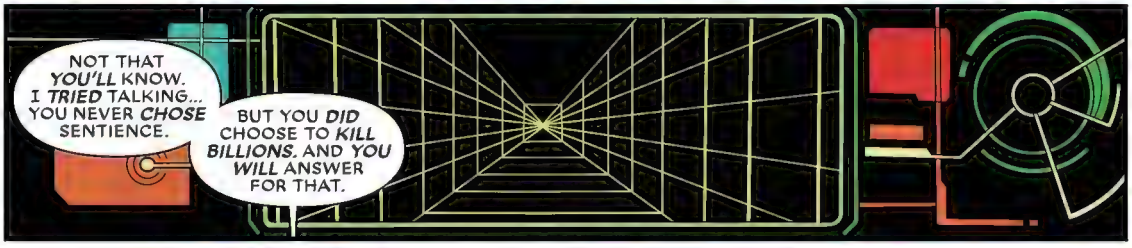
MY STAR SYSTEM WAS DESTROYED. I *LIVED* THANKS TO A *WAKANDAN* RELIEF TEAM.
WAKANDA SAVED ME--IT RAISED ME, *TAUGHT ME* TO *GUARD THE STARS.*
MY SUN *DIED*--MY WORLD *WITH IT.* YEAH, I KNOW THE *ORKASTRANS...*
...I KNOW THEM A *HELL OF A LOT BETTER* THAN YOU!
SLAM
FIGHT, THEN! HOWL AT ME FROM BEHIND YOUR PRECIOUS METAL SHELL!
YOU SAY I CAN'T CRUSH YOU? PERHAPS NOT! BUT AS YOUR ARMOR HEATS...
...AS I MANGLE IT WITH RADIATION...
AS I COOK YOU ALIVE, YOU WILL SEE...
...THIS STAR KNOWS NO MASTER!
UMBINGELELI?

OPEN THE HATCH.
HAPPY TO. BUT A BREACH IN THE HULL'S SEAL WILL ALTER ITS--
RRRRRIPTCH
INTEGRITY.
QUASAR'S GOT HIS FOOT IN THE DOOR.
UMBINGELELI! TARGET THE TECH AT QUASAR'S CORE AND SET A COURSE!
TARGETING AND SETTING. IT'S...BEEN AN HONOR.
THAT SCRAP WITHIN ME IS NOTHING! A TURD OF ERRANT ORE TO BE INCINERATED!
AND YOU WILL SOON JOIN IT.
YOUR SHIP REPELS ME NO LONGER, VETMAN.
RRRRRRRRRKT
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY GRAVITY RIPS IT WIDE - WHEN MY HEAT MAKES A KILN OF YOUR HOME?
WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN THERE'S NOTHING TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE BURNING FACE OF A GOD?
GUN IT, MOSTLY.

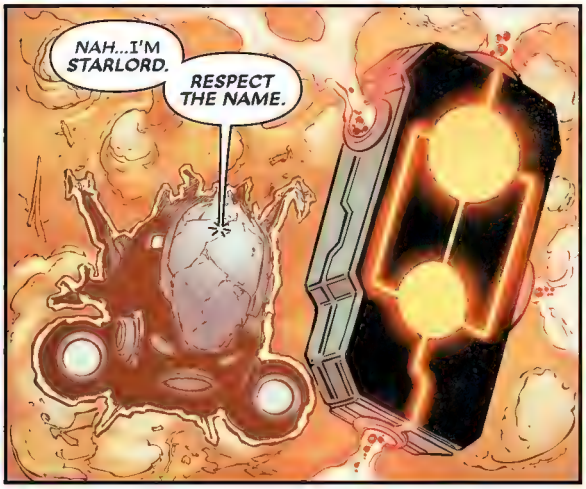
FLEE?! THAT IS YOUR ANSWER?!
WHERE WILL YOU GO?
PLOKT
YOU BELIEVE SAFETY WAITS INSIDE MY FIERY FLESH?


I WILL DEVOUR YOU, REND YOU INTO BASE ATOMS IN THE FURNACE OF MY BEING!

PROBABLY *COULD*, QUASAR-- IF YOU HAD TIME.
TIME?! MY LIFE WILL STRETCH TRILLIONS OF YEARS!


NOT THAT *YOU'LL* KNOW. I *TRIED* TALKING... YOU NEVER *CHOSE* SENTIENCE.
BUT YOU *DID* CHOOSE TO *KILL BILLIONS.* AND *YOU WILL* ANSWER FOR THAT.

TO WHOM-- TO YOU?! YOU'LL BE ATOMIZED IN MY CORE!
YOU'RE NOTHING! JUST A HERETIC WHO FLEW TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN!


NAH...I'M *STARLORD.*
RESPECT THE NAME.

CHWOOFT

NNNNAAAAAAAAOOOOOOOOO

BLAEET
BLAEET
BLAEET
STARLORD! AMANDLA ESTRELLAS! YOU CROSSED GALAXIES YOU BRAVED THE INNER SYSTEM TO RESCUE ORKASTRA-3.
ON ORDERS OF THE DUKE-ELECT... WE'VE COME TO RETURN THE FAVOR.

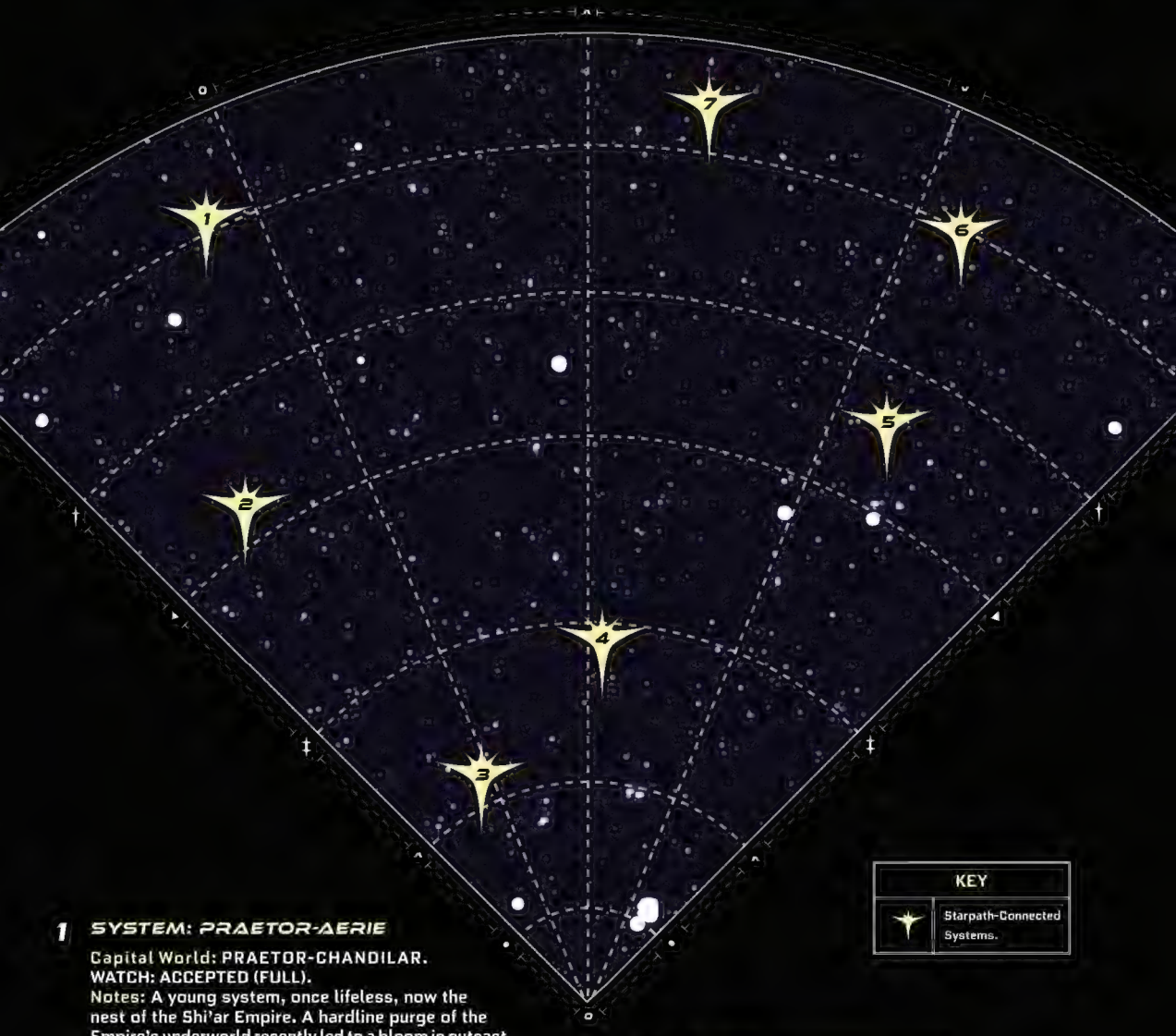
WEEKS LATER.
"IT'S BEEN AN HONOR"? I'M INSULTED YOU'D THINK I WAS DONE FOR, UMBINGELELI.
THE ODDS OF SUCCESSFULLY TRAVELING THROUGH THE HEART OF A STAR ARE 3,720,000 TO--
RIGHT. NEW ORDER--NEVER AGAIN TELL ME THE ODDS.
IT'S GOOD YOU'RE ALIVE THOUGH. I CAN RUN YOUR FLEET, BUT PUNCHES MUST STILL BE THROWN.
AS SUCH, QUASAR REMAINS DORMANT. AND ORKASTRA-3 HAS ACCEPTED YOUR WATCH.
OUR ORBIT IS STABLE. THE MANIFOLD ENGINE IS ACTIVE. WE'RE NOW CONNECTED TO YOUR ENTIRE FLEET...
...NETWORKED WITH EVERY SHIP ORBITING EVERY STAR SYSTEM YOU GUARD.
BY THE STARPATH.
FROM ONE SYSTEM TO ANOTHER...IN ONE SMALL STEP.
IF ONLY EVERY SYSTEM WELCOMED ME. BUT THE REJECTIONS STILL MATTER.
THEY WANT TO BE STUBBORN? I GET IT. BUT I'LL EARN THEIR TRUST.
I'VE GOT TO...
...BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

ABOVE THE PLANET MIGHTUS.
LORD-- LORD DRACULA! THE SHIP...
RIPPAKOOM
"DRACULA RISEN" PART 2
...WE'LL BE CRUSHED ON IMPACT--NOTHING COULD SURVIVE A CRASH LIKE THIS!
HOLD FAST, NIGHT FORGE. YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU WERE--NONE OF YOU ARE.
YOU ARE MY CAPTAINS NOW. YOU ARE VAMPIRE, AND YOU WILL RISE FROM THIS.
REST. HEAL. REJUVENATE.
I WILL MAKE CONTACT WITH THIS NEW WORLD.
ANY WELCOME WILL BE MET IN KIND.
BUT SHOULD WE BE SPURNED, SHOULD WE BE ATTACKED...
...OUR ATTACKERS WILL BE MET WITH DEATH...
...AS ONLY DRACULA CAN DELIVER.
KRASH

STARWATCH LEDGER

UNIVERSAL MAPPING—SECTION 6791

1st Admin: Estrellas, Amandla (Starlord). 2nd Admin: Umbingeleli (Ancestral A.I.)



1 SYSTEM: PRAETOR-AERIE

Capital World: PRAETOR-CHANDILAR. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: A young system, once lifeless, now the nest of the Shi'ar Empire. A hardline purge of the Empire's underworld recently led to a bloom in outcast Shi'ar pirates and mercenaries.

2 SYSTEM: QUASAR

Capital World: ORKASTRA-3. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: An old system, newly traumatized. Once the victim of a despotic sun, the system's people now fight to reinvent themselves on its one surviving world.

3 SYSTEM: ACYMMA

Capital World: MAYONGA. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: A strong system with a questionable capital, where two native species are divided by longevity. The ruling Nihudjka live for centuries, while the Madjka live for months.

4 SYSTEM: BENHAZIN

Capital World: WAKANDA. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: Starlord's adopted home system, after the loss of her birth system, Axa. Here Starlord built the Starpaths, folded-space doorways connecting two unconnected points, from legacy biotech based on the work of the Earth mutant Eden Fesi, F.K.A. Manifold. These Starpaths make every system under Starlord's watch no more than one step away.

5 SYSTEM: MORTKO-MAR

Capital World: GHOUL PLANET. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: A wretched system orbiting a dim star. Its capital, Ghoul Planet, is a hub of vice and iniquity. However, its secondary worlds need not pay for the sins of its ghouls.

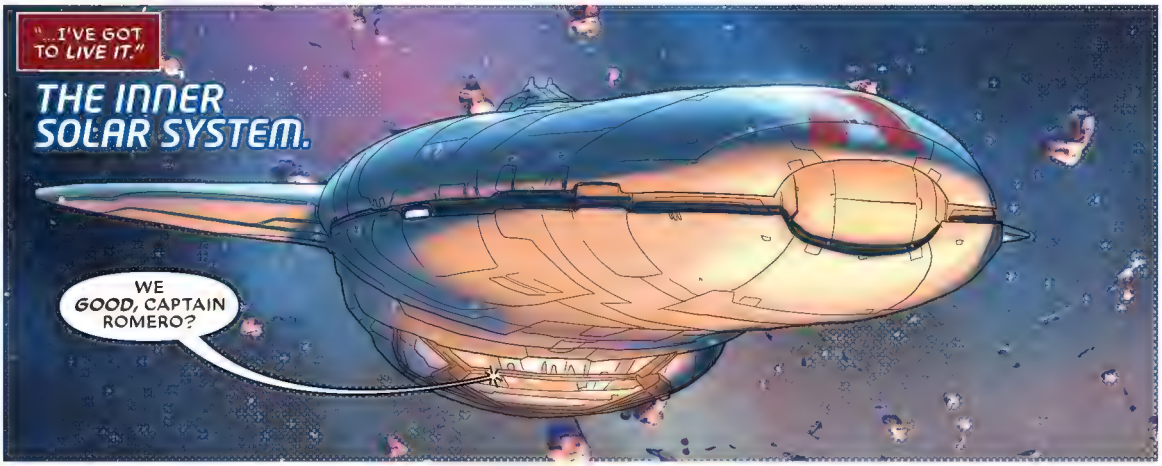
6 SYSTEM: INQUISITRA

Capital World: ZOSIMOS. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).
Notes: Home to a Hexfinder Cooperative, from which an Intergalactic Inquisition is growing. Its planets, and even its star, are theorized to have alchemical origins.

7 SYSTEM: OVIDA

Capital World: ARANEO. WATCH: ACCEPTED (CONDITIONAL).
Notes: Home to the Death Spiders, who prize conquest and consumption above all. The Araneons accepted a conditional watch, instructing Starlord to guard only their star but never visibly intervene in their affairs, lest they look weak. Starlord agreed, but, wary of ulterior motives, placed unique safeguards on their system's Starpath.

NUEVA YORK.
EARTH-2099.
YEARS AGO.
TO OUR CORPORATE OVERLORDS...
LEONARDI'
ripan
...TO THE MEAGER SALARIES THEY PAY US AND THE DRINKS THEY FACILITATE!
OHARA, MIGUEL
AND TO YOU, ROMERO. THE NEXT ALCHEMAX LAB RAT TO BE SHOT INTO SPACE.
CHILL, MIGUEL. A ROGUE PLANET APPEARS AROUND THE SUN, AND I GET TO EXPLORE IT?
OR PILLAGE IT. THERE'S A REASON THE SUITS PICKED YOUR TEAM FOR YOU.
SO THEY FORCED A FEW MINING TECHS ON ME. SO WHAT? IT'S SPACE. IT'S A TRIP TO THE SUN.
YOU, MICROCHIP...YOU KNOW WHERE MY HEART'S AT. THIS IS MY DREAM...


"...I'VE GOT TO LIVE IT."
THE INNER SOLAR SYSTEM.
WE GOOD, CAPTAIN ROMERO?

LOOK AROUND, ED. WE'RE MORE THAN GOOD.
ALL DUE RESPECT, CAPTAIN-- WE AIN'T HERE TO LOOK, WE CAME TO DIG.
WELL, LOOK ANYWAY. SOMEONE'S GOT TO TELL ME IF THEY'RE SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING.

HA! IT'S LIKE A FACE! AN' THE POOR GUY GOT HIS EYE SHOT OUT. RELAX, CAPTAIN...
...I BET IT'S LIKE THAT ONE ON MARS. CRATERS N' RIDGES, YOU KNOW?
IT ALMOST SEEMS SAD, ED... BUT OKAY, LET'S START OUR LANDING SEQUENCE...

"...AND TAKE ONE SMALL STEP FOR ALCHEMAX."
DIG'S ALMOST SET, CAPTAIN!
THAT'S GREAT, ED. BUT THIS PLACE... IT'S INCREDIBLE. ALCHEMAX WAS RIGHT.
THERE'RE ELEMENTS HERE WE'VE NEVER SEEN! LOOK AT THE SOIL...
THE GRASSES ARE SO FINE... BUT THEY DON'T ACT LIKE GRASS. THEY'RE MORE LIKE...
...LIKE HAIRS, LIKE CILIA. IT'S REACTING TO ME-- TO MY PALM...LIKE IT'S AFRAID.
ED--WAIT! SOMETHING'S ALIVE IN THE SOIL! I NEED TO RUN TESTS!
STOP--ALL OF YOU! DON'T FIRE THE DRILL! DO NOT FIRE THE DRILL!
SORRY, CAPTAIN-- ALCHEMAX WANTS A CORE SAMPLE...
CHOKT
...WE GOT OUR ORDERS.
RRRRUMBLE KRIK KRAK
WHOA! WHO'S ROCKIN' THE GODJAM BOAT?!
NO--NO! I TRIED TO TELL YOU! IF THIS SOIL-- IF IT'S ALIVE SOMEHOW...

...IT'LL HAVE DEFENSES!
KRIKABUPT
HELP! CAPTAIN! ED! DEX! IT'S GOT ME!
IT'S GOT ME! IT'S GOT MEEEEEE-EEE...
MY GOD...THEY TURNED JAY TO SOUP, IT WAS SO FAST...
S'TERRIBLE...SHOCKIN' ABOMINATIONS...JUST DEVOURIN' 'ER LIKE WOLVES.
...OR LIKE WHITE BLOOD CELLS.
WE NEED TO GO! NOW!

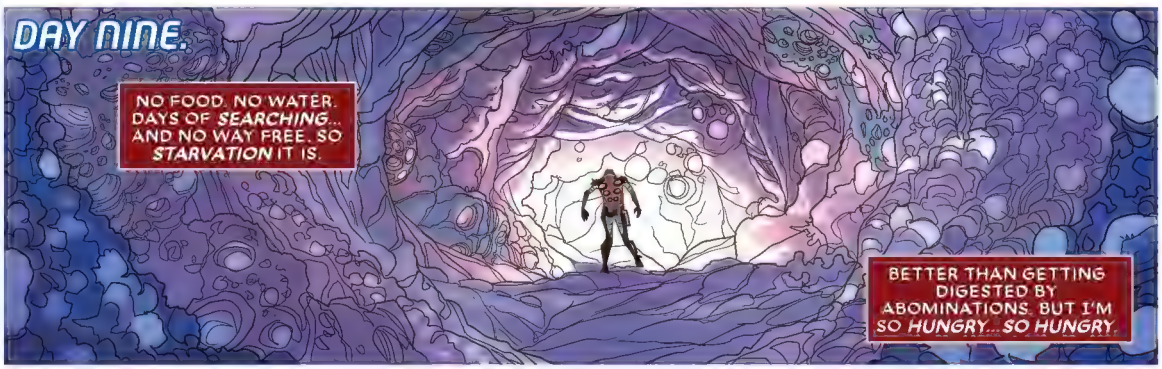
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
ED! DEX! COME ON-- WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE SHIP!
MY PLASMAGUN'S STILL GOT A CHARGE-- I'LL CLEAR A PATH!
DON'T HAVE TO ASK ME TWICE! THIS PLANET'S A REAL BAS--
--TAAAAAARGHD!
FIZZ FIZZ FIZZ
SON OF A-- IT'S JAMMED! BUT THEY'RE PLASMA CLIPS!
FORGET DEX! IF WE'RE GONNA SURVIVE THIS, WE GOTTA MOVE!
ALCHEMAX HAD TO HAVE SOME IDEA THIS PLANET HAD LIFE!
WE'RE NOT MINING IT--WE'RE STABBING IT! THEY KNEW I'D NEVER DO THAT!
GO! START THE LAUNCH SEQUENCE!
SURE THING, CAPTAIN. BUT WE MADE IT, WE SHOCKIN' MADE IT...
...AN' THERE'LL BE SOME BONUS WAITIN' BACK ON EARTH.
KLIK

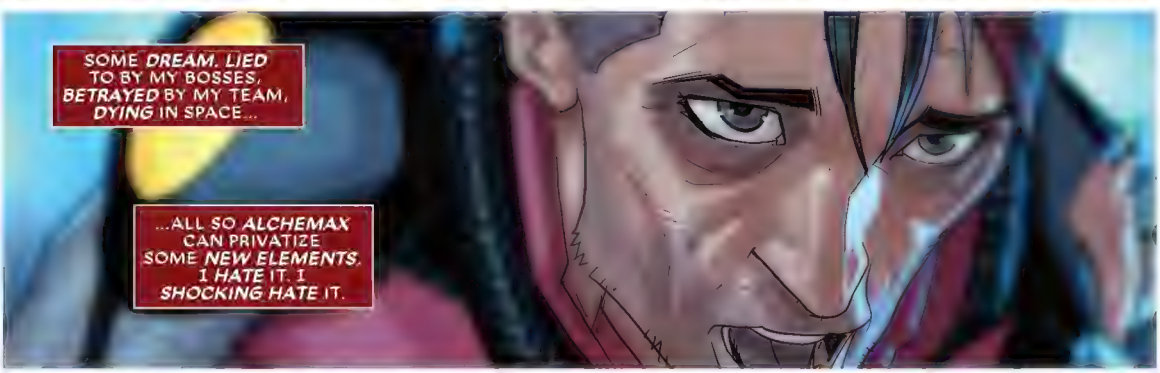
ONE I DON'T INTEND TO SPLIT.
ZAP
AHK!
BUT HEY, ROMERO?
THANKS FOR GETTIN' ME AND THE CORE SAMPLES HOME SAFE.
ED...YOU SHOCKING... YOU SHOCKING BASTARD...
COME ON... COME ON! YOU CAN'T JAM UP-- NOT NOW!
IT'S THE SUN--GOT TO BE! GRAVITY'S TUGGING ON THE CLIP'S PLASMA--
KLIK
OKAY! THERE WE--
ARMED
WHOA!

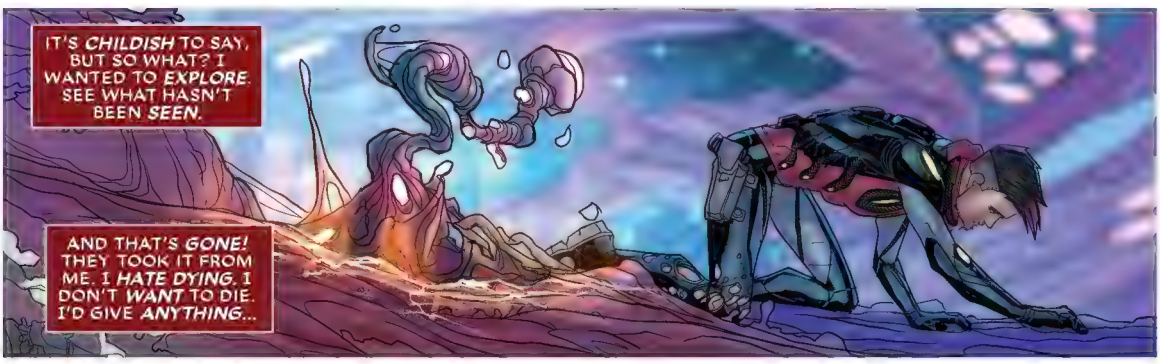
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
WHERE THE HELL AM I EVEN RUNNING?
THAT'S RIGHT--FOR MY LIFE!
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
FIZZT FIZZT FIZZT
SHORT AS IT IS. SHOCK THE SUN--COME ON! GIVE ME ONE! JUST ONE MORE--
KRIKARUPT
--SHOT!
KLIK
FINALLY!
ZAPCRASH
÷HUFF HUFF HUFF HUFF HUFF÷

DAY FOUR.
ENCRYPTED INTERNOLOG ACTIVE. NEUROSKELETAL RECORDING ON. SUBJECT--ROSS ROMERO.
HAD THE INTERNOLOG FOR YEARS, NEVER USED IT. FEELS FITTING NOW.
BEEN DAYS. THOSE ABOMINATIONS DIDN'T FOLLOW--MUST NOT FIND ME A THREAT.
NOT LIKE I'VE GOT ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO. AND THIS PLACE DOESN'T ANSWER.
IT SHIFTS THOUGH. IT LURCHES. ALMOST LIKE IT'S BREATHING.

DAY SEVEN.
RATIONS ARE CRASHED, AND I'M HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING THE WATER DOWN.
BLEEARHGG...
BY NOW, THE SUIT CAN'T FILTER OUT ALL THE WASTE. BUT THE AIR'S GETTING BETTER...
...WITH EVERY BREATH THE CHAMBER TAKES. I...I THINK MORE THAN THE DIRT'S ALIVE HERE.

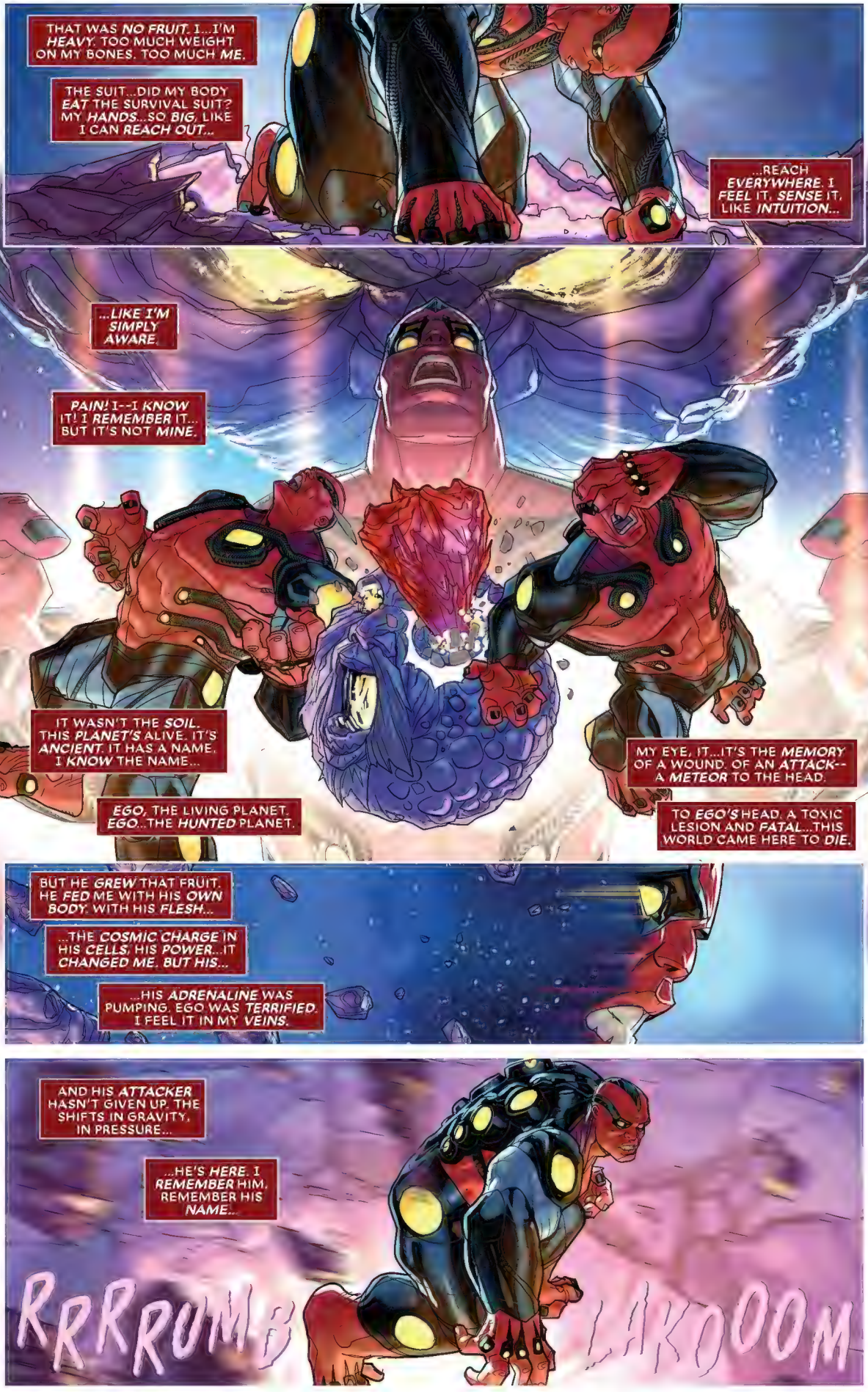

DAY NINE.
NO FOOD. NO WATER. DAYS OF SEARCHING... AND NO WAY FREE. SO STARVATION IT IS.
BETTER THAN GETTING DIGESTED BY ABOMINATIONS. BUT I'M SO HUNGRY...SO HUNGRY.


SOME DREAM. LIED TO BY MY BOSSES, BETRAYED BY MY TEAM, DYING IN SPACE...
...ALL SO ALCHEMAX CAN PRIVATIZE SOME NEW ELEMENTS. I HATE IT. I SHOCKING HATE IT.


IT'S CHILDISH TO SAY, BUT SO WHAT? I WANTED TO EXPLORE. SEE WHAT HASN'T BEEN SEEN.
AND THAT'S GONE! THEY TOOK IT FROM ME. I HATE DYING. I DON'T WANT TO DIE. I'D GIVE ANYTHING...

...JUST FOR SOMETHING TO EAT.
IS...IS IT LIKE A FRUIT? BUT IT GREW HERE. RIGHT HERE. THE ODDS OF THAT...
THE AIR GOT BETTER WHEN I COULDN'T BREATHE. NOW WHEN I'M STARVING...
...I THINK IT GREW FOR ME. I THINK THIS PLACE GREW IT FOR ME.
AND I CAN'T AFFORD TO ARGUE.
THE TASTE IS... IT'S LIKE SWEET IRON. IODINE. AND LIKE--LIKE, BEYOND VOLATILE ACIDITY.
AND IT'S SOFT, LIKE SCRAMBLED EGGS. LIKE LIVER. SHOCK, IT'S DISGUSTING, IT'S GREAT. I...
...I CAN'T STOP. I CAN'T STOP. I FEEL GOOD. FEEL LIKE I COULD RUN FOR DAYS. BUT IT'S...
...IS IT MOVING INSIDE ME? ARE MY INSIDES MOVING? IT'S WEIRD, IT'S SICK, IT'S...

RRROOOAARRGH!


THAT WAS NO FRUIT. I...I'M HEAVY. TOO MUCH WEIGHT ON MY BONES. TOO MUCH ME.
THE SUIT...DID MY BODY EAT THE SURVIVAL SUIT? MY HANDS...SO BIG, LIKE I CAN REACH OUT...
...REACH EVERYWHERE. I FEEL IT, SENSE IT, LIKE INTUITION...
...LIKE I'M SIMPLY AWARE.
PAIN! I--I KNOW IT! I REMEMBER IT... BUT IT'S NOT MINE.
IT WASN'T THE SOIL. THIS PLANET'S ALIVE. IT'S ANCIENT. IT HAS A NAME. I KNOW THE NAME...
EGO, THE LIVING PLANET. EGO...THE HUNTED PLANET.
MY EYE, IT...IT'S THE MEMORY OF A WOUND. OF AN ATTACK-- A METEOR TO THE HEAD.
TO EGO'S HEAD. A TOXIC LESION AND FATAL...THIS WORLD CAME HERE TO DIE.
BUT HE GREW THAT FRUIT. HE FED ME WITH HIS OWN BODY. WITH HIS FLESH...
...THE COSMIC CHARGE IN HIS CELLS, HIS POWER...IT CHANGED ME. BUT HIS...
...HIS ADRENALINE WAS PUMPING. EGO WAS TERRIFIED. I FEEL IT IN MY VEINS.
AND HIS ATTACKER HASN'T GIVEN UP. THE SHIFTS IN GRAVITY, IN PRESSURE...
...HE'S HERE. I REMEMBER HIM. REMEMBER HIS NAME...
RRRRUMB
LAKOOOM

TERRAX
THE PLANET HUNTER!
YOU LEFT A *LONG TRAIL*, EGO. BUT YOUR *WOUND* FESTERS. ITS *STINK* IS EASY TO TRACK. *NOW* I FIND YOU HERE...
...BREEDING *MAGGOTS. DESPERATE* FOR AN INHERITOR. BUT I WILL HAVE MY *KILL*. YOUR *POWER WILL NOT* LIVE ON.
NOT WITH THIS *BRITTLE SPACEFARER*, INTERCEPTED ON HIS SLOW TRUDGE TOWARD *EARTH*...
...NOR WITH THE *LIVING TUMOR* HIDING WITHIN YOUR CORPSE.
YOU *DIE TODAY*, EGO. YOU, YOUR *POWER PRIMORDIAL* AND ALL YOUR *SPAWN*.
RRRZAK!

"LIVING TUMOR"?
YOU PICKED THE WRONG DAY, HUNTER.
...A HULK. AND RED, THE COLOR OF FURY. A PITY YOU'VE INHERITED EGO'S MIGHT, BEAST.
I SNUFFED THIS HUMAN GNAT FOR CARRYING BUT A TRIMMING OF HIS FLESH.
ED?!
AH, IT HAD A NAME. WORRY NOT, YOU'LL SOON FOLLOW IT. YOU SEE...
...YOU PULSE WITH THE POWER PRIMORDIAL. THE STRENGTH OF THE LIVING PLANET.
AND THERE IS NO GREATER GAME THAN THE COSMIC FORCES.
YOU HUNTED, YOU KILLED EGO... FOR SPORT? FOR AMUSEMENT? HE WAS UNIQUE!
HE WAS SINGULAR IN THE UNIVERSE, AND YOU ROBBED IT OF THAT! I'VE HAD A BAD RUN...
...STRANDED, BETRAYED, NEARLY STARVED. AND YOU WON'T BE THE END OF IT.
YOU MAY HAVE MURDERED THE LIVING PLANET...

...BUT HIS RAGE LIVES ON!

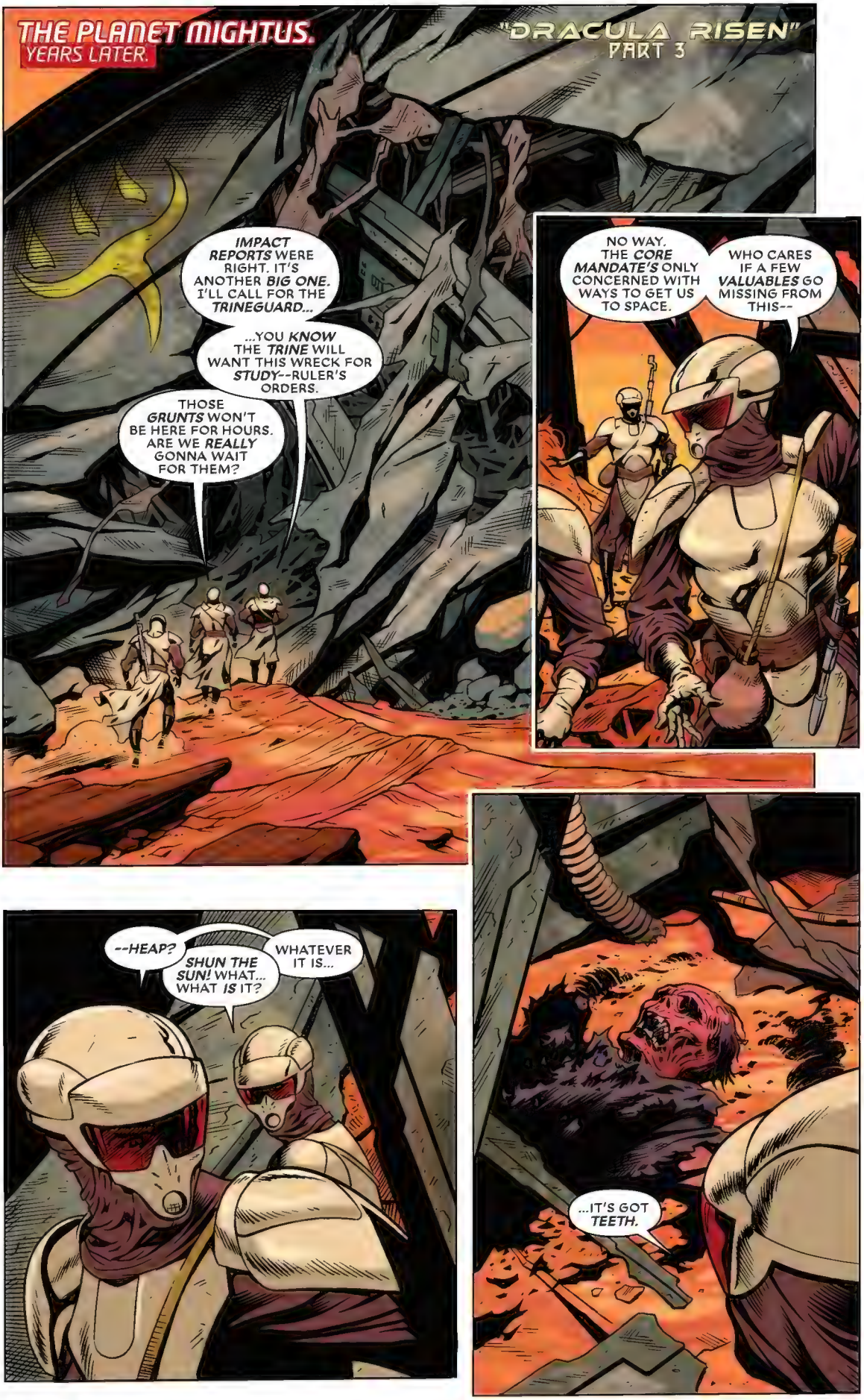
PERHAPS, BEAST. BUT NOT FOR LONG.
SLUKT
KRAK
YOU KEEP CALLING ME THAT.
IT IS APT.
YOU'RE A WILD TUMOR BORN OF EGO-- LITTLE MORE.
EGO
I KNOW WHAT I AM, HUNTER. ITS GENETIC MEMORY. I'M NO BEAST. NO TUMOR.
I'M EGO'S LIVING LAST WISH. A COSMIC WEAPON BORN OF HIS DYING RAGE.
AH. A TOOL, THEN. AND TOOLS MAY BE BROKEN.
NO, TERRAX. YOU WERE RIGHT THE FIRST TIME.

I'M A HULK!
KRAKOOM
SO YOU MAY BE, BUT I HAVE HUNTED THE GREAT BEINGS FOR DECADES.
I HAVE KILLED THE GODDESS EVE WARLOCK. TANNED THE FLESH OF ORIGIN AND UNBEING.
A HULK IS STILL A SMALL THING!
SMASH
MAYBE I WAS. MAYBE I WAS GREEDY, MAYBE I WAS HUMAN.
SMASH
BUT HUMANS LEFT ME TO DIE-- ROBBED ME OF A DREAM.
EGO'S LAST ACT SAVED ME-- HE PUT THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE WITHIN MY GRASP!
THE DREAM'S ALIVE BECAUSE OF HIM! THAT'S ANYTHING BUT SMALL...

...BUT THERE'S *ONE THING* LEFT TO DO BEFORE I GO!
RRRORRRUMMMMBBBBLE
AS YOU'D EXPECT, I'VE GOT SOME *ANGER*.
AND I'M NOT THE *ONLY ONE*. EGO'S MEMORIES ARE *MY* MEMORIES.
IF...IF THAT *COURSING HARE* BELIEVES SUCH A *PLAYFUL JAB* COULD LAY ME LOW, HE--
HE CAME TO THE *SUN* TO DIE IN PEACE.
NO! WAIT...THE *SOIL* REPELS MY COMMAND! THA-THAT CANNOT BE...
AND THE WAY I SEE IT, IT'S ONLY *RIGHT*...
I CANNOT DIE...NOT HERE...NOT LIKE...
...THAT EGO TAKES HIS *KILLER* DOWN WITH HIM.
...THIS...

NOW, I KNOW WHAT I *SHOULD* BE THINKING-- AM I *MAN* OR *MONSTER?* WELL, NO IDEA.
WALKING THE SURFACE OF A *DYING PLANET*, I FEEL LIKE THE *STRANGEST MAN* OF *ALL TIME*.
TERRAX WAS RIGHT. BETWEEN EGO'S DEATH THROES AND MY OWN BETRAYALS...
...THERE'S A *RAGE* IN ME ONE THIS *NEW BODY*, THESE *NEW SENSES*, CAN BARELY CONTROL.
BUT IF IT *CONTROLS ME*, IF I LET IT TAKE THE *WHEEL*... I'LL MISS *SO MUCH*.
NEW WORLDS, NEW CIVILIZATIONS, EVERYTHING I'VE *HOPED* FOR SINCE I WAS A KID.
MY CREW, MY JOB, EVEN TERRAX TRIED TO *TAKE THAT*. I CAN'T LET THE *RAGE* FINISH THE JOB.
I'VE GOT TO USE IT, GOT TO KEEP GOING... BUT FIRST, I NEED TO SAY *GOODBYE*. TO TELL EGO IT'S *OKAY* TO LET GO.
I THANK HIM FOR GIVING ME THE *STARS*, SOMETHING I'LL *NEVER FORGET*.
THEN I *REACH OUT* WITH MY NEW *AWARENESS*, SENSE *HYPERSPACE* HUMMING AROUND ME.
THE *ANGER* BOILS UP AGAIN. BOILS HOT. BOILS HIGH. AND THIS TIME, IT'S *FUEL*.
THIS TIME, FOR THE FIRST TIME, IT'S MY *IGNITION SWITCH*...

...FOR ONE GIANT LEAP INTO THE UNKNOWN.


THE PLANET MIGHTUS.
YEARS LATER.
"DRACULA RISEN"
PART 3
IMPACT REPORTS WERE RIGHT. IT'S ANOTHER BIG ONE. I'LL CALL FOR THE TRINEGUARD...
...YOU KNOW THE TRINE WILL WANT THIS WRECK FOR STUDY--RULER'S ORDERS.
THOSE GRUNTS WON'T BE HERE FOR HOURS. ARE WE REALLY GONNA WAIT FOR THEM?
NO WAY. THE CORE MANDATE'S ONLY CONCERNED WITH WAYS TO GET US TO SPACE.
WHO CARES IF A FEW VALUABLES GO MISSING FROM THIS--
--HEAP?
SHUN THE SUN! WHAT... WHAT IS IT?
WHATEVER IT IS...
...IT'S GOT TEETH.

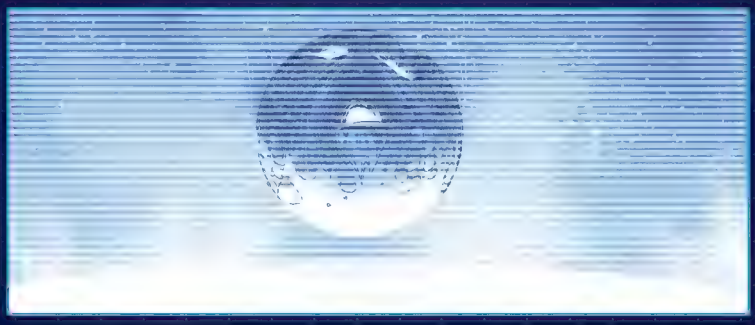
ALCHEMAX PRE-MISSION BRIEF

CLASSIFIED AND ENCRYPTED

SAFEGUARDS LIFTED.
AUTHORIZATION: CECILSSON, THOMAS WILLIAM.

MISSION CODENAME ENCOUNTER WITH EGO

_ Having reviewed coverage of all data drawn from long-range scans, the board is prepared to move forward with a sponsored expedition to the surface of our solar system's newest occupant. While the planetoid arrived in tight orbit around our sun, seemingly without notice, it is not happenstance at all. Electromagnetic scans reveal activity surrounding the planetoid not unlike that of a human brain, and spectral scans reveal numerous elements that currently fail to appear on our periodic table. While Alchemax pirate satellites are still working to leech intergalactic media for our own exploitation, we have received enough to make an educated guess—this planet is more likely than not alive. However, tele-carbon dating implies an age greater than all known living planetoids...all but one.



EGO, THE LIVING PLANET

_ While encounters with Earth are relatively rare, our pirated data shows Ego to be ubiquitous throughout the universe. Time and again, his power has rivaled the greatest heroes of the stars. And here we find him visibly wounded. Here we find him in a decaying orbit around our own sun. As an alien planetoid rife with exotic elements, he is a treasure trove. But as a living world inching closer to a stellar inferno, he appears to have come to die.

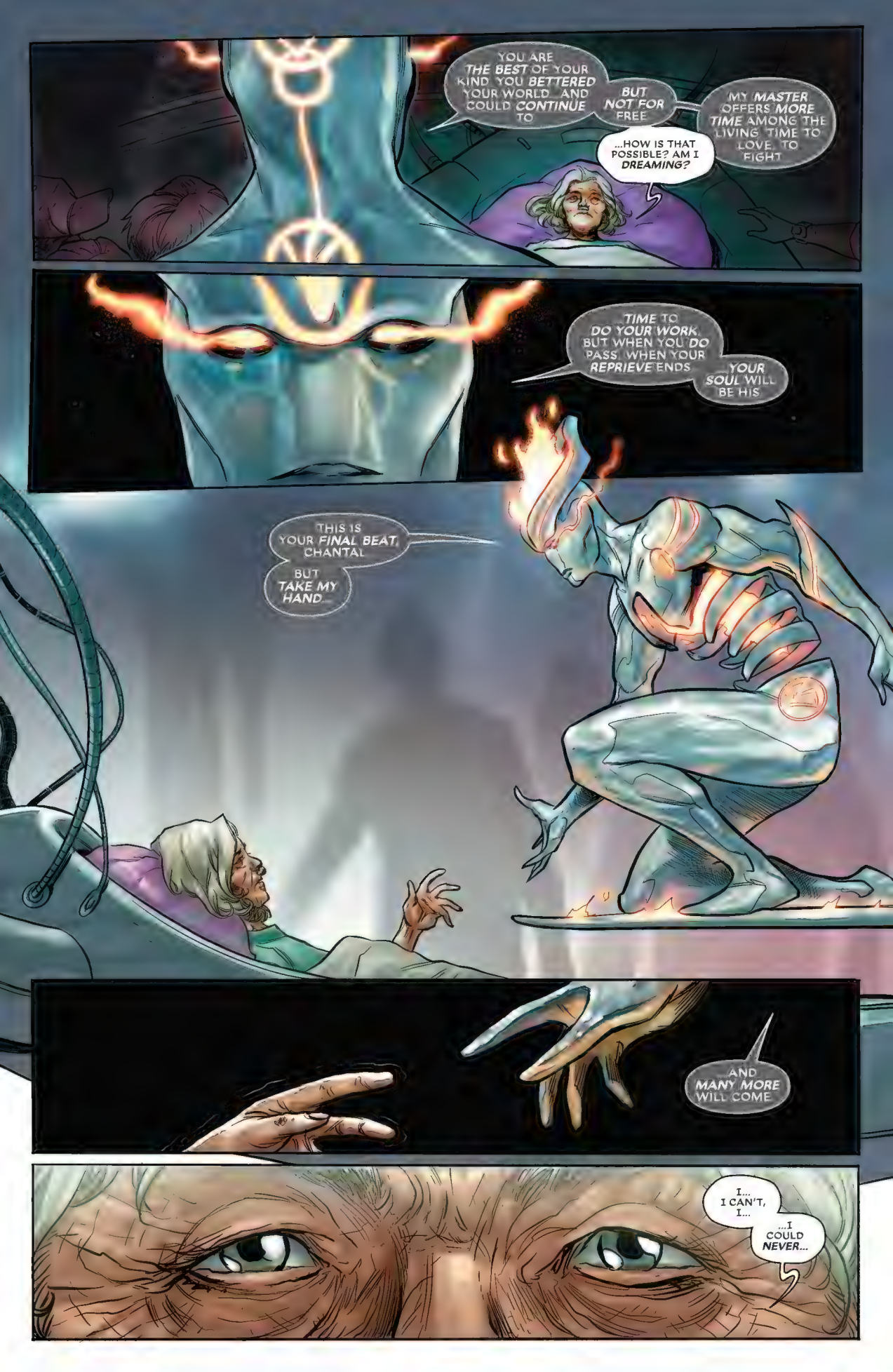
In other words, Ego is a treasure trove with a highly final ticking clock.

The board recommends a manned mission. However, that presents a quandary. Our most skilled field researchers and groundbreakers also rate highest among the staff logs on the Kohlberg moral scale. This makes the overlap of those qualified to lead a mission to Ego and those willing to mine a living world extremely small. In fact, there is no overlap. However, when the full extent of Ego's sentience is left redacted, there is one potential candidate—one who will overlook minor moral compromises in favor of his stated reason for joining Alchemax: to see what has never been seen before.

This candidate is Ross Romero, currently a project chief in Research and Development. Provided Ego's higher thought is withheld, Romero is statistically likely to accept this mission and ask few questions. With his experienced leadership secured, staffing a crew beneath him that knows the true mission will be simple. The amoral man is in no short supply on our duty rosters. But secrecy will remain key—personality charts confirm Romero will walk if he learns too much. Alchemax must be first to monetize any new elements discovered on Ego. Thus, Romero is hired—but must never know the truth.

EARTH-2099. OASIS X.
MUTANT MEGACITY.
2000 MILES SOUTHWEST OF NUEVA YORK.
KRYSTALIN, S'GOOD...I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE...
WE'RE ALL HERE, CHANTAL. EVERYONE--YOUR FAMILY, THE X-MEN.
YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING FOR MUTANT RIGHTS SINCE BEFORE I WAS BORN. WITHOUT YOUR WISDOM...
...WITHOUT MUTANT ELDERS LIKE YOU, THIS WOULDN'T BE PARADISE AT ALL.
FROM GENOSHA TO THE MUTANT PROMISED LAND... NOT A BAD RUN...
NOT BAD AT ALL, MOM...
...NOT BAD AT ALL.
CHANTAL GOVINDA

I AM THE SILVER SURFER!
YOU HAVE LIVED WELL, CHANTAL. YOUR SOUL IS RICH BUT OUTWEIGHED BY A FEATHER.
YOU HAVE USED WHAT TIME YOU HAD FOR GOOD. NOW YOUR TIME DRAWS TO A CLOSE.
I COME TO YOU AT YOUR HEART'S FINAL BEAT WITH A SIMPLE OFFER...
...MORE.


YOU ARE THE BEST OF YOUR KIND. YOU BETTERED YOUR WORLD, AND COULD CONTINUE TO
BUT NOT FOR FREE
MY MASTER OFFERS MORE TIME AMONG THE LIVING. TIME TO LOVE. TO FIGHT
...HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? AM I DREAMING?
TIME TO DO YOUR WORK. BUT WHEN YOU DO PASS, WHEN YOUR REPRIEVE ENDS
...YOUR SOUL WILL BE HIS
THIS IS YOUR FINAL BEAT, CHANTAL
BUT TAKE MY HAND
...AND MANY MORE WILL COME
I... I CAN'T, I...
...I COULD NEVER...

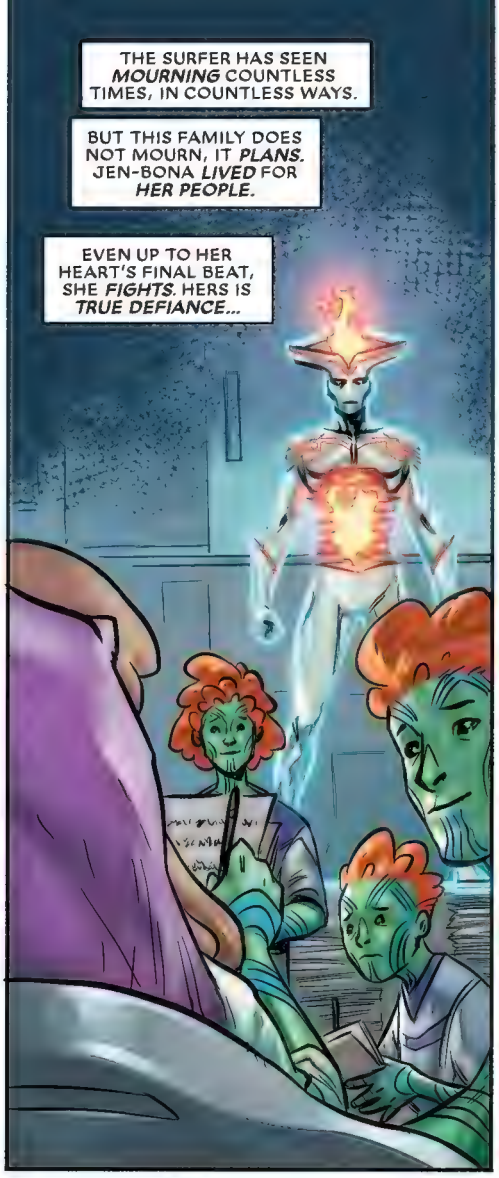
HIGH OVER THE ROOFS OF THE WORLD HE SOARS, SEEMINGLY FREE AND UNFETTERED AS THE ROARING WIND ITSELF!
BEHOLD THE SKY-BORN SPANNER OF A TRILLION GALAXIES! THE RESTLESS, STREAKING STRANGER FROM BEYOND!
THE GLISTENING, GLEAMING LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL...
...THE HERALD OF THE DARKEST GIFT OF ALL!
WAIT--MOM? MOM?! IT--BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
GRANDMA, YOU'RE AWAKE! THAT MUTANT MEDICINE REALLY WORKS!
THE BRINGER NOT OF MIRACLES, BUT OF DAMNATION DEFERRED.
THE SURFER ASCENDS INTO THE VOID, INFERNAL HEAT AT HIS HEELS...

...AND THE DEATHCALL BIDDING HIM TOWARD THE NEXT SOUL TO BE TEMPTED.
HE SOARS ABOVE MARS, WHERE SPIDER-WOMAN PLAYS COLONY SHERIFF.
STAND DOWN--NOW! YOU WILL ALL BE HEARD!
MARS HOLDS MANY GOOD SOULS, BUT NONE NEAR DEATH. NONE RIPE.
PASSING CERES, A BARREN ORB DEADLY TO MOST, THE SURFER SPIES THE ZEROES.*
CAST OFF FROM EARTH, UNDEAD, NEEDING NO FOOD NOR REST, THEY'VE HEALED THEIR MINDS.
*SEE MIGUEL O'HARA--SPIDER-MAN 2099. --MARK 2099
THEIRS IS A CULTURE OF INNOVATION, OF CREATION, BORN OF THE FREEDOM THEY FOUND...
...AT SPIDER-MAN'S HANDS. THEY ARE GOOD BUT WILL NEVER DIE.
AND SO THEY WILL NEVER KNOW THE SURFER'S BARGAIN.
AT THE GALAXY'S EDGE, THE SURFER FINDS OPPORTUNITIES MISSED. EVE WARLOCK.
A PERFECT BEING ADRIFT IN THE VOID, FRESHLY DEAD--BEYOND THE POINT OF USE.
OPEN SPACE OVERWHELMS SOME. BUT TO THE SURFER, IT'S A RELIEF.
THE SOL SYSTEM HAS HAUNTED HIM SINCE THE FIRST SOUL HE SOLD TO HIS MASTER...

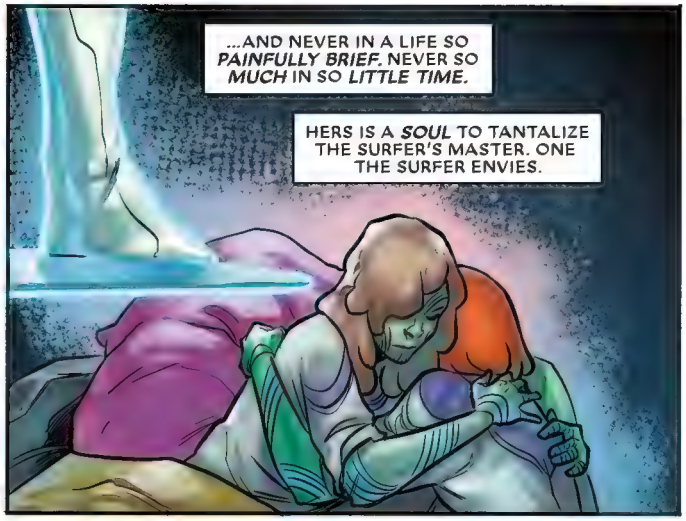
...HIS OWN.
ONCE, HE WAS JONAH MARLO OF EARTH.
SON TO A FATHER LOST TO THE STREETS, HE DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THOSE WITH LESS.
TO DELIVERING FOOD, SHELTER, AND WATER AS A HUMAN RIGHT.
A GOOD LIFE... CUT SHORT TOO SOON.
JONAH, JONAH...ALL THAT WORK, NEVER SMOKING, BARELY DRINKING...
WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D END UP HERE WITH SO MUCH LEFT UNDONE?
MARLO RESENTED HIS CANCER--HE DIDN'T WANT TO DIE SO YOUNG AND ALONE.
SO MEPHISTO OFFERED A SECOND CHANCE. ENDLESS LIFE. AND DESPERATE, AFRAID...

...MARLO ACCEPTED THE BARGAIN. BUT IT WAS NOT WHAT HE HOPED.
IMMORTAL, UNYIELDING, AND UNSEEN LEST HE SO WISHES...
...THE SURFER HUNTS ONLY THE NEXT SOUL TO TEMPT FOR MEPHISTO.
BUT WITH EACH LIFE DAMNED BY AN IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE, HE FESTERS.
WITH EACH ACCEPTANCE, HIS SHAME GROWS. WITH EVERY REJECTION, HE IS PLEASED.
HE LONGS TO BE FREE, BUT THAT IS BY DESIGN. FOR HIS MASTER, SUFFERING IS THE POINT.
AND SO SATAN'S SURFER COMES TO YET ANOTHER INNOCENT WORLD.
MAYONGA
COMES TO TEMPT ITS BEST WITH THE WORST.

THE STREETS OF *MAYONGA* ARE NOT UNLIKE EARTH'S...
...BUT A *HARD DIVIDE* STANDS BETWEEN ITS *TWO SPECIES.*
THE *NIHUDJKA,* WHO LIVE FOR CENTURIES, MAKE UP THE *RULING CLASS.*
FAR BELOW THEIR GALAS ARE THE *MADJKA,* WHO LIVE FOR ONLY FOUR MONTHS.
LONGEVITY HAS LET THE NIHUDJKA CONTROL MADJKA CULTURE AND HISTORY.
THE MADJKA LIVE ONE MONTH TO GROW, TWO TO WORK, TO LOVE, AND ONE TO SETTLE AFFAIRS...
...BEFORE BEING USED AS A *FUEL SOURCE* IN DEATH. THE NIHUDJKA CALL THIS *NATURAL.*
THEY CLAIM THIS IS THE MADJKA ROLE IN THE *ECOSYSTEM* AND *ALWAYS HAS BEEN.*
IT IS A *LIE,* ONE SOME MADJKA REFUSE TO BELIEVE. SOME LIKE *JEN-BONA...*
...WHOSE *WHOLE LIFE* WAS SPENT FIGHTING FOR MADJKA FREEDOM. NOW DEATH APPROACHES...
...AND SHE WORKS TO *CONTINUE THE FIGHT.* JOURNALS WILL PASS HER STORY TO HER HEIRS...
...AS *THEIRS* WILL BE PASSED TO THEIR *FUTURE KIN.* A *TRUE WRITTEN HISTORY* WILL BE THEIR SWORD.
IN TIME... THE MADJKA *WILL* BE FREE.


THE SURFER HAS SEEN *MOURNING* COUNTLESS TIMES, IN COUNTLESS WAYS.
BUT THIS FAMILY DOES NOT MOURN, IT *PLANS.* JEN-BONA *LIVED* FOR *HER PEOPLE.*
EVEN UP TO HER HEART'S FINAL BEAT, SHE *FIGHTS.* HERS IS *TRUE DEFIANCE...*

...NOT OF *DEATH'S STING,* BUT OF ITS *MEANING.* JEN-BONA WILL DIE--HER *DREAM* WILL NOT.
THE SURFER HAS SEEN SELFLESSNESS, BUT NEVER SO *ABSOLUTE,* SO *DRIVEN...*


...AND NEVER IN A LIFE SO *PAINFULLY BRIEF.* NEVER SO *MUCH* IN SO *LITTLE TIME.*
HERS IS A *SOUL* TO TANTALIZE THE SURFER'S MASTER. ONE THE SURFER ENVIES.

ONE HE *WISHES* HAD MORE TIME. ONE THAT EVEN *KNOWING* THE PRICE...
...WOULD ACCEPT HELL IF IT MEANT PROTECTING HER KIND.

HE *KNOWS* WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE OFFER IS MADE.
HE KNOWS.

AND FOR THE *FIRST TIME* SINCE HE TOOK TO THE STARS...

...THE WEIGHT OF THAT IS MORE THAN HE CAN BEAR.
AND SO, JEN-BONA PASSES.
AND SO, THE FIGHT LIVES ON.
AND SO, SHE MEETS HER REWARD.
ONE... JUST ONE...
ALL THE YEARS, ALL THE WORLDS, ALL THE SOULS REAPED IN HIS SERVICE...
...EVEN HE COULDN'T BEGRUDGE ME ONE MERCY--

SURFER!
CHOK
WHAT?! NO! YOU CAN'T!
NOT FOR THIS!
RRRRRIP
NOOOOOOOO!
A GOOD PET COMES WHEN IT'S CALLED. AND YOU WERE CALLED.
BECKONED TO THE HADEAN UNDERWORLD. SUMMONED HOME...
SLAM

...TO THE REALM OF MEPHISTO.
YOU KNOW YOUR CHARGE. YOU LIVE YOUR MANDATE. YET YOU DENY ME A SOUL MOST RIPE.
WHY?
I...I COULDN'T. SHE DIDN'T DESERVE...

SHE WOULD'VE TAKEN YOUR OFFER.
PTOOO
I...I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT, NOT HER...
...NOT AFTER ALL I'VE DONE...
YOU "ALLOW" NOTHING.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS TOUCH OF REBELLION?
KRAK
I AM DEPRIVED OF ONE RIPE SOUL. YOU WILL REPAY THE LOSS.
THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF CHOICE. YOU ARE BOUND TO MY SERVICE.
MY FLESH IS BOUND, YES. AND YOU HAVE MADE A DISGRACE OF IT. HOW MANY SOULS?
HOW MANY GOOD PEOPLE HAVE I DAMNED FOR YOU AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE?
BUT JEN-BONA IS BEYOND YOUR REACH...AND THAT IS A VICTORY.
I CANNOT ESCAPE YOU MASTER...

...BUT I WILL SERVE NO LONGER!
KRAKOOM

A GOOD PET OBEYS. A GOOD PET DOES NOT BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS IT.
AND YOU WANT TO BE A GOOD PET, YOU SEE, BAD PETS GET PUT DOWN--
KRUNCH
A STRIKE THAT WEAK COULD ONLY BE FUELED BY A BLEEDING HEART.
BUT I TIRE OF YOUR OUTBURST... GATHER YOURSELF AND RETURN TO WORK.
I'LL DIE FIRST!
WOULD YOU, NOW?

NYAAAAAAGH!
YOU BELIEVE YOU'VE SUFFERED, SURFER?
RIPTCHOK
URHHK!
THE SOULS BELOW ENJOY CENTURIES OF SLOW, CREEPING DECAPITATION.
YET YOU WHINE AFTER BUT YEARS OF REAPING THE UNIVERSE'S MOST DELECTABLE?
KOFF
YOU. YOU TRICKED ME ONCE PREYED ON MY DESPERATION
BUT THAT IS MY PAIN. I WILL NOT SELL IT FORWARD ANY LONGER.
I CANNOT.
YOU ENTERED MY SERVICE BECAUSE YOU FEARED DEATH.
NOW YOU'D GOAD ME INTO DELIVERING IT?
HOW PEDESTRIAN.
SLAM
AND WHERE DO YOU THINK YOUR SOUL WOULD GO?

HERE. TO JOIN MY WEEPING HOARD.
YOUR SUFFERING WOULD NOT END BUT, AT LAST, BEGIN IN FULL.
SO... SO BE IT... SO BE IT.
FLAY MY SKIN IN THE GREAT TANNERY.
BURY MY HEART IN THE TRAUMA FIELDS, MAKE POISON OF MY CHERISHED MEMORIES.
DO YOUR WORST. I WILL NOT DAMN ANOTHER. NEVER AGAIN.
THE LOAM OF HELL IS FERTILE WITH THE ROT OF THOSE WHO DARED VOW WHAT THEY WOULD NOT DO.
TO YOU, YOUR MISERY IS SOME EPIC TRAGEDY. TO ME...IT IS A TRIFLE TO ENLIVEN ETERNITY.
I RUINED YOU BECAUSE I COULD.
AND I WILL DESTROY YOU BECAUSE I--
--CAN.
AH. WAIT.
THERE IS A GREATER TORMENT.
PUFFFT

MAYONGA.
DEEP SPACE.
VLORTCH
HHRRRRRNYAGH!
I...
I'M ALIVE
STRUCK AS THOUGH A BLACK HOLE HAS FILLED HIS HEART, THE SURFER SEES THE TRUTH.
MORE THAN ANYTHING, HE WISHED TO DIE. TO BE PUNISHED FOR HIS SINS.
I'M... ALIVE
BUT THE DEVIL DOES NOT GIVE WHAT IS WANTED.. HE PREYS ON THE WANT.

THE SILVER SURFER IS FREE. THE SILVER SURFER IS NO LESS A PRISONER.
HE HAS NO MANDATE AND NO PENANCE. ENDLESS LIFE AND UNENDING SHAME.
HE HAS *OPEN SPACE* AND NO WAY FORWARD. NO WAY, BUT *ONE*...TO *ABSOLVE HIMSELF.*
TO RECOUP DEED WITH DEED, TO SAVE SOULS WHERE HE ONCE *DAMNED* THEM. FOR TOO LONG...
...THE SURFER FLEW IN SERVICE TO THE DEVIL. NOW HE WILL SERVE *NO MASTER* BUT *LIFE.*
NOW WHEN *DEATH COMES* FOR THE *BEST* OF THE UNIVERSE...
...IT WILL FIND THE *SILVER SURFER* WAITING.

THE PLANET MIGHTUS.
"DRACULA RISEN"
PART 4
RIDE, TRINEGUARD! RIDE HARD!
THE TRINE REFUSE TO CEDE THIS WRECK TO THE WASTES!
THE CORE MANDATE SPEAKS CLEAR AND TRUE!
THIS SAD SALVAGE IS OURS BY RIGHT!
ALL THAT FALLS FROM THE SKY, BE IT POTCH OR HIGH TREASURE...
...IS PROPERTY OF THE MIGHTUSIAN EMPIRE!

Jonah C. Marlo Indenture of Heraldry with Jack Scratch, a.k.a. Mephisto

Transcribed, Illuminated, and Personified—Nueva York, 2099 AD, Earth-Local

Document Signed, 1 Page, Medium: Word, Deed, and Soul.

THIS Indenture Witnesseth that **Jonah C. Marlo** of Nueva York, by and with his own consent, and by these Presents, doth voluntarily and of his own free Will and Accord put himself a Herald to **Mephisto** of the Hadean Underworld with him to live on and (after the Manner of a Herald) to Serve and collect Souls Indefinitely. During all which Term the said Herald his said Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his infernal Commands gladly everywhere obey: He shall do no Damage to his said Master nor see it be done by others without letting or giving Notice to his said Master. He shall not waste his said Master's time, nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not commit deception, nor offer Mercy within the said Term. At forgiveness, or any other unfavorable virtues, he shall not play, whereby his said Master may have Damage with his own collected souls. In all Things as a faithful Herald, he shall behave himself to his said Master and all his during the said Term. And the said Master during the said Term shall, by the best Means or Method that he can, tolerate or cause the said Herald to be tolerated in his ongoing existence, though also shall not find and provide unto the said Herald sufficient meat, drink, or lodging. For the true Performance of all and every said Covenants and Agreements, either of the said Parties bind themselves unto the other by these Presents. In Witness whereof they have here unto interchangeably put their Hands and Seals, in the year of local Earth-realm time, anno Domini, Two Thousand and Ninety-Nine.

Accepted and Acknowledged by:

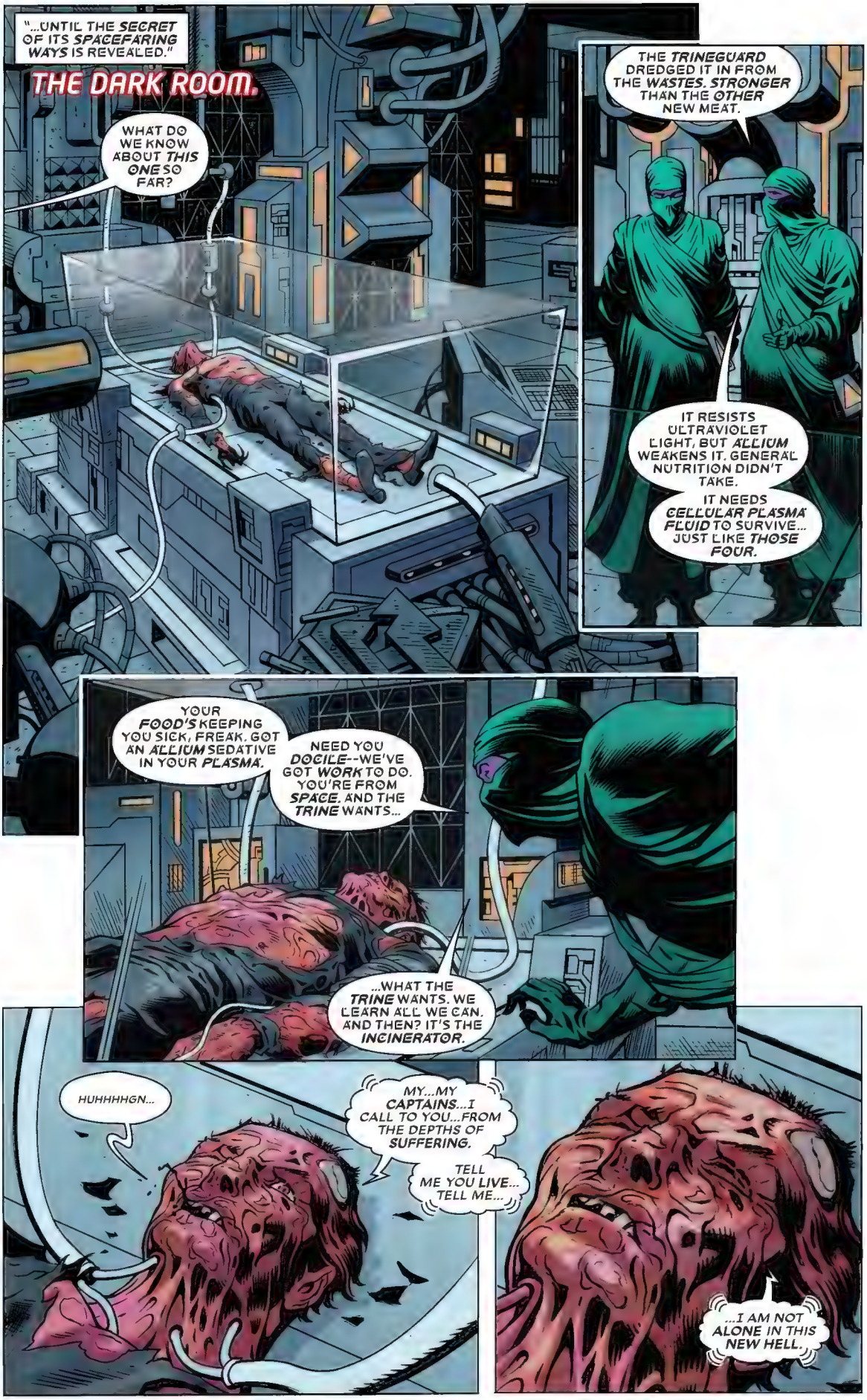
The In-Betweener
The Living Tribunal
Then

God Chaos
Goddess Witchcraft
Now

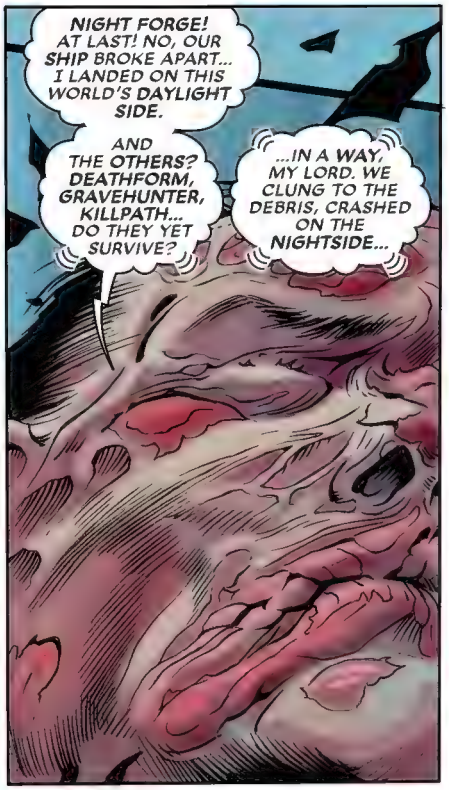
THE PLANET MIGHTUS.
LET'S GO, GEARHEADS... WRECK COMING IN!
SHUN THE SUN, CAPT'N...
...YOU AN' THE TRINEGUARD BROUGHT US A BIG ONE!
RIGHT, THEN! GET 'ER INSIDE AN' SHUT THE DAMN DOOR! THE DRAFT N' ALL!
COULD BE PART OF THE SAME WRECK WE PULLED IN FROM THE WASTES NOT LONG BACK.
SCANS SHOW ALIEN MATTER INSIDE--YOU GEARHEADS KNOW THE DRILL.
KNOW 'ER WELL, CAPT'N. STANDIN' ORDERS.
OPEN IT UP...

"...AND LOOK FOR SCRAPS."
DON'T JUST GAWK. YOU SAID IT-- STANDING ORDERS.
COLLECT ANY AND ALL ALIEN MATTER...
...AND DELIVER IT TO THE DARK ROOM FOR STUDY.
THAT COMES STRAIGHT FROM THE TRINE.
OOF! DAMN TRINE AIN'T MADE GOOD ON NOTHIN'! THEM VOWS AIN'T BEEN KEPT...
...BEEN TOLD TOO LONG NOW 'BOUT FINDIN' GLORY AND FORTUNE IN SPACE. AN' I DON'T THINK THIS BIT 'A CHAR'S GONNA CHANGE THAT.
QUIET. IT'LL SERVE OUR CORE MANDATE. IT'LL HELP US TAKE THE STARS. THIS SAD BEAST...
...IS NOW MIGHTUSIAN PROPERTY.

THE TRINELANCE.
CAPITAL OF MIGHTUS.
FATHER, MOTHER...I HAVE WALKED AMONG THE PEOPLE. LISTENED, IN DISGUISE...
...AND I FEAR OUR REIGN OF PROSPERITY MAY BE IN JEOPARDY.
JEOPARDY? MY DEAR, DRAMATIC SON...
...AS LONG AS WE EACH HOLD OUR PIECE OF THE TRIFORM SWORD, THE TRINE WILL RULE.
WE'D RULE OVER UNREST, FATHER. WHEN YOU AND MOTHER TOOK POWER...
...YOU VOWED CONQUEST TO UNITE OUR PEOPLE. THE WORLD WAS YOURS. BUT SOON...
...THERE WAS NO WORLD HERE LEFT TO CONQUER. AND SO--
SO--THE CORE MANDATE. A SHARED DESTINY TO CONQUER SPACE.
OUR POWER WILL HOLD SO LONG AS MIGHTUS CHASES THAT DREAM.
A DREAM YOU GAVE THEM. BUT IT HAS BEEN AGES WITH NO SPACESHOT. QUESTIONS ARISE.
IF WE DO NOT DELIVER THE STARS SOON, OUR GRIP ON MIGHTUS WILL FALTER.
WE WILL DELIVER. TO DATE, ONLY THAT FOOL STARLORD HAS ESCAPED THE DARK ROOM.
ALL OTHER ALIEN MATTER IS OURS TO DISSECT. TO CUT APART...


"...UNTIL THE SECRET OF ITS SPACEFARING WAYS IS REVEALED."
THE DARK ROOM.
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS ONE SO FAR?
THE TRINEGUARD DREDGED IT IN FROM THE WASTES. STRONGER THAN THE OTHER NEW MEAT.
IT RESISTS ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT, BUT ALLIUM WEAKENS IT. GENERAL NUTRITION DIDN'T TAKE.
IT NEEDS CELLULAR PLASMA FLUID TO SURVIVE... JUST LIKE THOSE FOUR.
YOUR FOOD'S KEEPING YOU SICK, FREAK. GOT AN ALLIUM SEDATIVE IN YOUR PLASMA.
NEED YOU DOCILE--WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO. YOU'RE FROM SPACE. AND THE TRINE WANTS...
...WHAT THE TRINE WANTS, WE LEARN ALL WE CAN. AND THEN? IT'S THE INCINERATOR.
HUHHHHGN...
MY...MY CAPTAINS...I CALL TO YOU...FROM THE DEPTHS OF SUFFERING.
TELL ME YOU LIVE... TELL ME...
...I AM NOT ALONE IN THIS NEW HELL.

LORD... LORD DRACULA... IS IT REALLY YOU?
I THOUGHT... WE FEARED YOU'D DIED...IN THE CRASH.


NIGHT FORGE! AT LAST! NO, OUR SHIP BROKE APART... I LANDED ON THIS WORLD'S DAYLIGHT SIDE.
AND THE OTHERS? DEATHFORM, GRAVEHUNTER, KILLPATH... DO THEY YET SURVIVE?
...IN A WAY, MY LORD. WE CLUNG TO THE DEBRIS, CRASHED ON THE NIGHTSIDE...

...BUT WE WERE TOO WOUNDED TO FIGHT WHEN WE WERE FOUND. THEY CALL IT SCIENCE...
...BUT THEY TORTURE US. KEEP US WEAK WITH FILTERED SUNLIGHT, ALL BUT STARVED.
A ONE-WAY MEMBRANE SIPHONS OUR BLOOD FOR THEIR... TESTS. LORD DRACULA...
WE'RE NOTHING BUT LAB ANIMALS TO THEM...TO BE TORN OPEN AND DISCARDED.

AND I'VE SEEN THEIR CHARTS. I DON'T THINK WE'RE THE ONLY ONES.

DAYS LATER.
THE DARK ROOM
WE'VE READ YOUR REPORTS, DOCTOR. WE'D SPEAK WITH THE ALIEN MATTER ALONE.
LEAVE US.
YES, TRINE FATHER! THE ROOM IS YOURS--TO HONOR THE CORE MANDATE!
WE ARE THE TRINE. THE RULING FAMILY OF MIGHTUS.
YOUR BRAIN SCANS SHOW ACTIVITY. WE KNOW YOU CAN THINK. SO--ACKNOWLEDGE US.
AS WHAT? MY PATHETIC JAILERS?! YOUR WILLS ARE WEAK--I STOLE YOUR LANGUAGE...
...RAIDED YOUR MINDS THE INSTANT WE MET EYES! YOUR THOUGHTS SCREAM TO ME!
YOU... YOU SELL YOUR PEOPLE LIES AS DREAMS--IT'S THEATER TO HOLD ON TO POWER!
I DEFEND MY KIND--YOU USE YOURS! YOU'RE LOYAL ONLY TO YOURSELVES!
YOUR SUBJECTS WORK THEMSELVES TO THE BONE FOR A FALSE VICTORY THAT WILL NEVER COME!
MIGHTUS' RIGHT IS TO EVER EXPAND. WE BORE THAT IDEA...AND IT MUST ALWAYS BE FED.
PTOO
YOU ARE NO LEADERS. I AM DRACULA. YES, I HAVE CONQUERED, EVEN BUTCHERED...

"...BUT I DID SO TO BUILD A NATION. TO PROTECT MY PEOPLE. KIN...
"...WHOM I NEARLY DIED DEFENDING FROM A SOLAR MASSACRE.
"FOR AGES, I SLEPT. FINALLY, I WOKE TO FIND OUR HUMAN ATTACKERS HAD CHANGED.
"HUMANITY HAD GIVEN MY KIND A WORLD OF THEIR OWN. DOMUS DRACONUM.
"A PLANET I SET OUT TO SEE, WITH THE AID OF A SPIDER-MAN.* BUT ALAS...
*AS SEEN IN MIGUEL O'HARA-SPIDER-MAN 2099 #2! --MARK 2099
"...THOUGH HUMANS NOW HONORED VAMPIRES, THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE DID NOT.
"MY STELLAR CASKET WAS PIRATED. I KILLED THE CAPTAIN AND TURNED HIS CREW...
"...BEFORE CRASHING HERE, TO A WELCOME OF FEAR AND DISDAIN. ALL THIS..."
...BECAUSE I LED FROM THE FRONT. BECAUSE I BLED FOR MY PEOPLE.
YES, WELL, ON MIGHTUS, LEADERS BLEED FAR LESS THAN WHATEVER A VAMPIRE IS.
YOU WILL SOON KNOW! YOUR PEOPLE WILL SEE YOU AS COWARDS AND OPPORTUNISTS!
AND YOU WILL BLEED ACCORDINGLY!
SOMEONE CERTAINLY WILL.
AFTER ALL, THE SECRET IN YOUR FLESH MAY FINALLY BRING US SPACE TRAVEL...

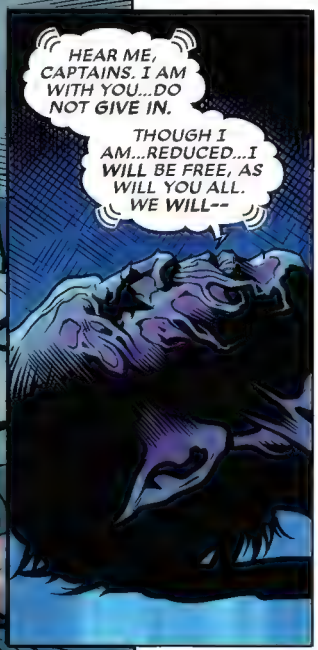
"...AND THAT IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR PROGRESS."
CEREBRAL FLUID EXTRACTION COMPLETE--TEST FOR PSIONIC POTENTIAL.
NNNYAAAAEEEGH!
AAAGH! HUUUOARGH!
MNYEEEHHHGK!
ULTRAVIOLET RESISTANCE LIMIT STILL UNCLEAR. INCREASE EXPOSURE BY ONE LOKNAR.
INEPT TRASH! DON'T WASTE YOUR ATROCITIES ON MY CAPTAINS! I LEAD THEM!
I AM THE STRONGEST VAMPIRE EVER MADE! I AM YOUR TARGET!
YOU ARE, BEAST. TRINE'S ORDERS. YOU LIVE AND YOU LISTEN, POWERLESS...
VVVVVRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
"...WHILE YOUR KIN DIE SLOWLY. AND AS YOU RAGE, WE EXTRACT YOUR ADRENALINE...
"...FOR USE AS AN EMERGENCY STEROID. ONLY ONCE YOUR CAPTAINS ARE DEAD..."
...WILL THE TRINE GRANT YOU DEATH.
KNOK KNOK
SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE US CLEAN THE GLASS.

YOU CATTLE--THE TRINE AREN'T WORTH YOUR LOYALTY!
I KNOW THEIR MINDS--I'VE READ THEIR HEARTS! THIS CORE MANDATE IS A RUSE!
YOU ARE A COMMODITY! THE GREAT DESTINY YOU WORK FOR IS THEIRS--NOT YOURS!
GIVE THEM THE STARS AND THEY WILL DEMAND GALAXIES! YOUR FIGHT WILL NEVER END!

VICTORY WILL ALWAYS BE JUST BEYOND REACH! IT IS THE CHASE THAT KEEPS YOU IN LINE!
THEY PREY UPON YOUR FAITH AS THEY DO MY FLESH!

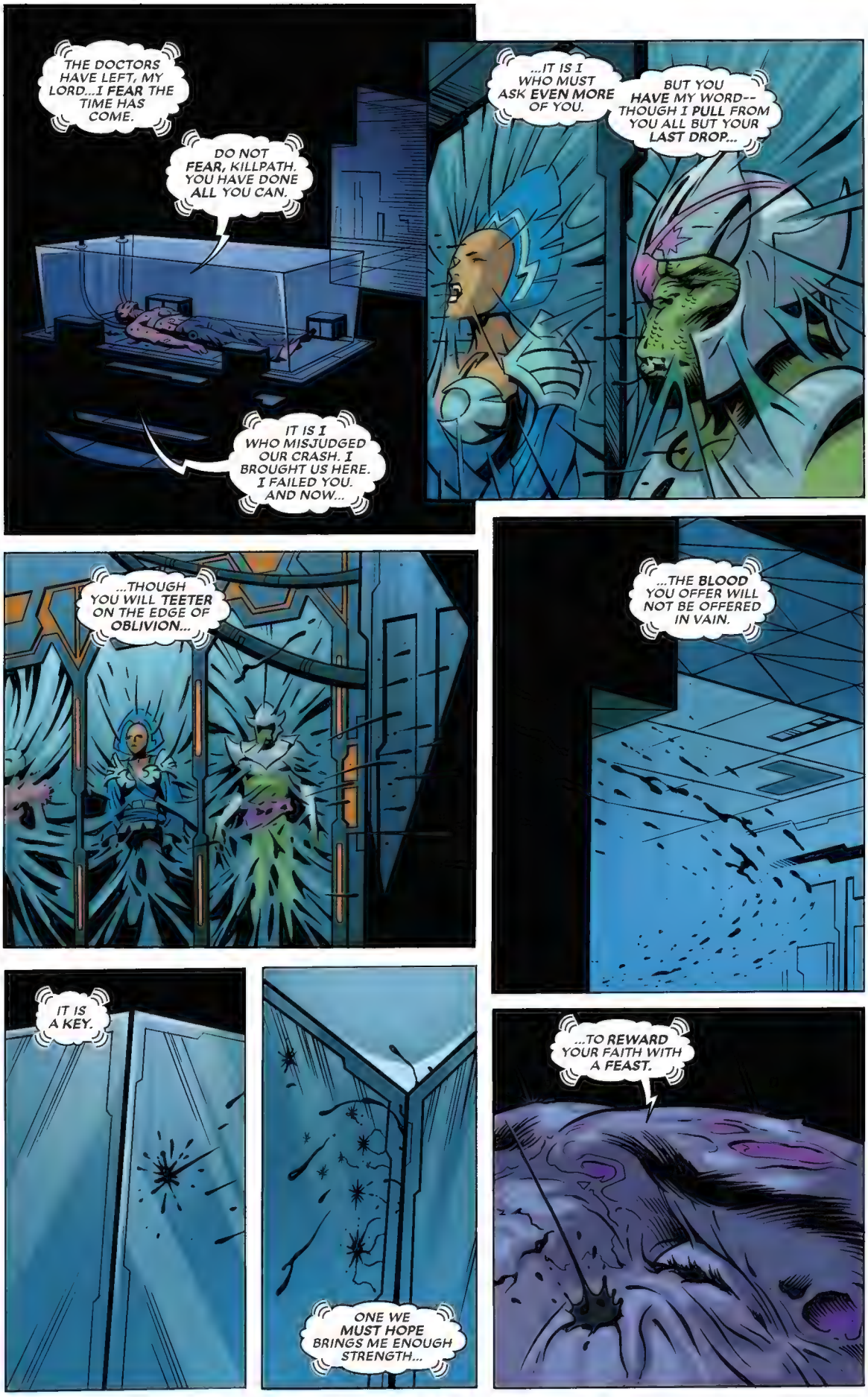
WERE IT ONLY ME WHO SUFFERED, I WOULD PITY YOU. BUT YOU HAVE TORTURED MY CAPTAINS.
AND SO, IF YOU INSIST ON PLAYING THE SHEEP... YOU WILL BE SLAUGHTERED AS SUCH.

PLEASE. YOU'RE TOO HOPPED UP ON ALLIUM TO LIFT A WRIST. THE INCINERATOR'S COMING...
...BY WEEK'S END, WE'LL KNOW EVERYTHING USEFUL ABOUT YOU. THEN IT'S COOKING TIME.


HEAR ME, CAPTAINS. I AM WITH YOU...DO NOT GIVE IN.
THOUGH I AM...REDUCED...I WILL BE FREE, AS WILL YOU ALL. WE WILL--

WAIT. WAIT... IT IS AS YOU SAID.
WE ARE NOT THIS DUNGEON'S SOLE PRISONERS...

...THERE IS ANOTHER, FAR BELOW.
A GREAT CREATURE OF THE STARS, NATIVE TO THE SHADOWY VOID.
A DARKHAWK. THIS...THIS IS A CHILD OF COSMIC NIGHT, MY CAPTAINS.
AND SUCH CHILDREN, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN...
...FALL UNDER MY DOMAIN.
SOON, WE WILL ALL FLY FREE.
SOON, WE WILL MAKE THIS WORLD FEAR THE DARK...
...BUT NOT WITHOUT GREAT PAIN.


THE DOCTORS HAVE LEFT, MY LORD...I FEAR THE TIME HAS COME.
DO NOT FEAR, KILLPATH. YOU HAVE DONE ALL YOU CAN.
IT IS I WHO MISJUDGED OUR CRASH. I BROUGHT US HERE. I FAILED YOU. AND NOW...
...IT IS I WHO MUST ASK EVEN MORE OF YOU.
BUT YOU HAVE MY WORD-- THOUGH I PULL FROM YOU ALL BUT YOUR LAST DROP...
...THOUGH YOU WILL TEETER ON THE EDGE OF OBLIVION...
...THE BLOOD YOU OFFER WILL NOT BE OFFERED IN VAIN.
IT IS A KEY.
ONE WE MUST HOPE BRINGS ME ENOUGH STRENGTH...
...TO REWARD YOUR FAITH WITH A FEAST.

HOURS LATER.
WHAT IS-- WHERE THE HELL IS THE ALIEN MATTER?!
WE--BUT WE LOCKED THE ANALYCELL! IT'S STILL SEALED-- THIS CAN'T BE!
THE UR-GLASS IS IMPREGNABLE! HOW COULD HE ESCAPE?!
LAB ONE? THIS IS LAB THREE...
...SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO OUR MEAT TOO...
...THEIR CELLULAR FLUID HAS BEEN DRAINED, LAB ONE. THEY'RE DEAD.
THIS DRACULA IS MIGHTIER THAN WE KNEW. PERHAPS THIS ISN'T A FAILURE AT ALL.
HE'S REVEALED HIDDEN GENETIC ASSETS TO OFFER MIGHTUS. HE WILL BE FOUND.
THEN, THESE...NEW TALENTS WILL BE WEAPONIZED. NOTIFY THE TRINE.
OH, THE TRINE WILL KNOW. OF THAT, YOU CAN BE SURE.
BUT WHY RUSH SUCH EXCITEMENT?

THE LIBERATION HAS JUST BEGUN!
CHOK
RUN!
RRRIIIPT
HE'S STILL IN THE CELL! HE'S--
SICK OF HIS CAGE! AS ARE HIS CAPTAINS. PRISONERS...WHO WILL HUNGER NO LONGER.
YOUR BLOOD WAS A BOON, CAPTAINS-- FUEL ENOUGH TO BREAK THESE FRAIL MINDS.
ENOUGH TO HIDE MYSELF, TO LURE THEM CLOSE...AND BEGIN THE TRUE ESCAPE.
YOUR SACRIFICE MUST BE REWARDED. YOU WERE STARVED-- BUT NO LONGER.
SLEKT
GORGE YOURSELVES ON YOUR OPPRESSORS... ON THIS WORLD.
REAP BLOOD AND ENTRAILS IN OUR NAMES. I WILL JOIN YOU...

...ONCE THE FINAL CHAINS HAVE BEEN BROKEN.
I AM SORRY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO YOU, MY FRIEND.
SORRY A CREATURE OF SUCH BEAUTY HAS BEEN TORMENTED IN THE DARK.
BUT YOUR TRIAL IS AT AN END.
AND AFTER A BRIEF MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL PAIN...
CHOMPK

"...THE TRIALS OF YOUR CAPTORS WILL FINALLY BEGIN."
WITNESS, MIGHTUSIAN NESTLINGS!
SUCH TORTURES ARE LESS AMUSING WHEN THEY'RE YOURS TO RECEIVE, ARE THEY NOT?!
WHY WASTE YOUR WORDS ON THIS SCUM, NIGHT FORGE? THEY'RE IGNORANT TO OUR TONGUE...
...BUT NOT OUR TEETH.
SAVE SOME FOR ME, GRAVEHUNTER!
NO--NO PLEASE! WE HAD ORDERS FROM THE TRINE! MANDATES!
LISTEN TO THEM BEG. NOT ONCE DID WE CRY OUT SO FROM THEIR SICK SCIENCE SACKS!
A PITY WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM, DEATHFORM--
CHOK
RRRRRRRRRUMBLE
THE FLOOR! WHAT'S THAT-- SOME KIND OF MIGHTUSIAN FAIL-SAFE?!
THEY'RE PULLING THE WHOLE FACILITY DOWN ON US! THEY'D MAKE THIS LABORATORY OUR TOMB!
GIRD YOURSELF, KILLPATH. THE POWER YOU FEEL IS OURS! THE RAGE...

...OF THE DARKHAWK UNLEASHED!
BRAKADOM

NOW FLY, MY CAPTAINS! WELCOME THE NIGHT'S EMBRACE!
WE ARE THE FIRST VAMPIRES MIGHTUS HAS EVER KNOWN! THE BURDEN FALLS TO US...
"...TO LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION.
"THE SOLDIERS, THE CITIZENS...THE CHILDREN. ALL HAVE AGONY TO PAY FOR.
"BUT THE TRINE...THIS IGNOBLE WORLD'S RULING FAMILY...
"...CREATORS OF THE CORE MANDATE THAT JUSTIFIED OUR PAIN..."
...I WILL VISIT WRATH UPON THEM MYSELF. AFTER ALL, I MADE A PROMISE.
AND A TRUE LEADER HOLDS TO HIS WORD.
COME, FOOLS OF THE TRINE! COME GAZE AT YOUR RUINED KINGDOM!
BASK IN THE ATROCITY YOUR CRUEL WELCOME HAS WROUGHT!

ATROCITY?
YOU CRASHED ON OUR WORLD...
...ALL THAT FELL WITH YOU IS OURS BY RIGHT.
OURS TO EXPLOIT! TO TAKE TO THE STARS FOR THE GLORY OF MIGHTUS!
YOU ARE NO VICTIM, DRACULA! YOU ARE A RESOURCE! YOUR UPRISING IS NOTHING!
BUT IF YOU INSIST ON A PREMATURE DEATH...
...WE WILL DRAW WHAT WISDOM WE CAN FROM YOUR CORPSE!
I THINK NOT.
NGUH, WH-WHAT? WHAT HAVE YOU--
CONQUERED YOUR MINDS, CHILD. IT IS AS APPROPRIATE AS IT IS POETIC.
KNEEL.
GHHHA, NO! YOU CAN'T! YOU CAN'T...
CRUNCH
I CAN, TRINE FATHER. I AM NO LONGER YOUR STARVED DOG. I AM THE NIGHT. I AM DRACULA.
I AM VAMPIRE...

...SHALL WE EXPLORE THAT CONCEPT TOGETHER?
WE ARE VAMPIRE. AND SO, WHEN PROVOKED...
"...WE BECOME PESTILENCE.
"A RAZOR WIND CUTTING THROUGH YOUR PEOPLE LIKE NATURE ITSELF."
WE ARE VAMPIRE. AND SO, HAVING SLAUGHTERED THOSE WHO ABUSED US...
...WE BLESS OUR PREY WITH THE DARK GIFT.
"WE MAKE OUR KIND OUT OF YOUR KIND. WE TAKE YOUR ARMY AS OUR OWN."
I AM VAMPIRE. AND SO--I PLUCK THE MEANING OF THESE BLADES FROM YOUR HEAD.
THE TRIFORM SWORD IS THE SYMBOL OF MIGHTUS'S RULERS. WHOSOEVER HOLDS IT HOLDS THIS ENTIRE WORLD IN THEIR GRASP. A WORLD... THAT IS NO LONGER YOURS.
ALL THAT WAS YOURS IS NOW MINE. AND ALL THAT IS MINE...
...NOW HUNGERS FOR YOUR THROATS.
YOU ARE MIGHTUS' LAST MEAL. AND ONCE MY ARMY HAS FED?
THE VAMPIRE HOMEWORLD BECKONS...

...AND CONQUEST CALLS!
NEXT:
DRACULA AGAINST ALL...IN
CONQUEST 2099!

PREMIER'S QUICKLOG –
LILITH DRACULA, F.K.A. LILITH DRAKE

CLASSIFICATION: Private. Encryption: Hereditary (Key Blood Code to Unlock)

ENTRY 1

For years, I fought my kind, fought my own father, on behalf of the greater good. But for all my victories on their behalf, humanity committed an act worse than vampires had committed against them. Their orbital solar attack would've eradicated us, if not for the very man I'd spent my life fighting, if not for Vlad Dracula, my father. The horror of the attack galvanized Earth. Finally, confronted with their own hate, enough of them changed. What vampires who lived were offered an entire new world as recompense for the attack. And Earth's greatest corporations worked to solve the thirst for blood that for so long cornered us to death. A nanotech treatment, one based off the serum once used to satiate the dhampir Blade, was created, we've been given a fleet, as well. And once we reach the new world we've scouted, the thirst will be no more. Domus Draconum, once founded, will be a world where the rivers and oceans run with blood. We will build beyond the thirst at last. As I negotiated on behalf of vampirekind, it's me who's been elected as our first premier.

ENTRY 37

Landing went smoothly enough. Only minor injuries were incurred, and the planet was found to hold no higher [illegible] life, just as long-range scans predicted. With our rations depleted, we moved quickly to deploy the nanotech infusion into the planet's water ways. In less than a local day, the planet's seas turned from starving blue to nourishing red. Domus Draconum was born.

ENTRY 113

Today, Domus Draconum's first permanent structure was erected. After local months of revelry, overcome with an abundance of blood as we've never known, we first explored our world by way of a nomadic trek. But now our capital has taken root.

ENTRY 199

Tomorrow will mark the first meeting of Domus Draconum's government. I was again elected premier, tasked to oversight by a cadre of elected thought leaders. Thanks to the blessed gift of our telepathic connection, we have granted universal vampire suffrage.

ENTRY 113

As if to mark the end of our first local year on Domus Draconum, the first vampire child native to this world was born today. They will experience nothing of our former plight. They and everyone to come will be reared in sanctuaries, educated in vampire schools and lead the first generation of unchained, unbridled vampire innovation.

ENTRY 300

The longer I sit in leadership, the more I begin to understand my father's cruel ways. Though I do not share his methods, I finally understand his passion for protecting our people. With every [illegible] we make, I become more indebted for the privilege of leadership. And with every new day, I become more avowed to defend our progress at any cost. Once, I wished him dead. Now I have taken his name, Lilith Dracula. One day, I hope soon, he will rise from his healing sleep on Earth's moon. And I'll have such victories to share with him.

RED HULK CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

When we were first brainstorming characters for ANNIHILATION 2099, there were obvious cosmic choices like Nova, Quasar, Star-Lord and Silver Surfer, but we wanted to throw in a wild card. I pitched writer Steve Orlando Red Hulk, and he was game. We'd do something that hearkened to the original INCREDIBLE HULK by Stan and Jack, something that would pay tribute in spirit to that first great super-hero monster story. When we approached Pete, I gave him the general outline to the story. He came back --and this is the genius of Pete Woods--with an incredible idea of his own. "What if when Ross is 'healed' by Ego's glands, the healing factor (for lack of a better term) doesn't make a distinction between the organic Ross parts and the technological suit parts so the Red Hulk is actually a techno-organic being melding suit, man and monster god. Think Kirby and Giger collaborating on a Red Hulk design." This was his first stab, which he only showed me just before we went to press. It's monstrous and powerful and I certainly wouldn't want to be a planet in his way while doing a hyperspace jump!

Original rough draft by Pete.

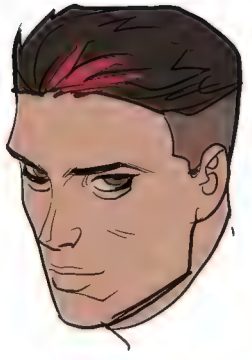
RED HULK CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

The first draft he shared was damn near perfect. But as I have a thing for Hulks with gladiator helmets or Mohawks, I asked to see a version with a head fin. Cool but ended up looking a little too Elvis for me, but Pete liked the idea and wanted to make it work as he thought the approach could give Red Hulk a monstrous dinosaur vibe. He came back with a sleeker version that flared when Red Hulk was in battle mode. Now it was perfect!

The best part? Pete liked the character so much he said yes when I asked him to draw the issue! It doesn't get any better than this for a comic-book editor!

--Mark Paniccia



THE LAST NOVA COSTUME DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

Hey, 2099ers! Editor Mark Paniccia here!

Pete Woods (who also did the ANNIHILATION 2099 Homage Variants along with the incredible interiors for the RED HULK Annihilation issue) did such a fantastic job on the designs for the main characters of this series that I just had to show them off!

Nova was a bit tricky because I wanted his silhouette to invoke Wolverine's without being too obvious on covers or in promo images. I wanted readers to make that discovery in the story. I asked Pete if he could skew toward John Buscema as an inspiration--that beefy and wider body type John did for some of his characters, particularly Logan. Costume-wise we wanted that iconic helmet shape and color scheme but with a Western/lone-cowboy vibe.

Pete's first stab (pun intended) at the design had a cool long coat that invoked a Union soldier. I really dug it, but the consensus was it wouldn't be practical in hand-to-hand combat. We also skewed toward Frank Quitely's NEW X-MEN design for the boots with thick, chunky soles.

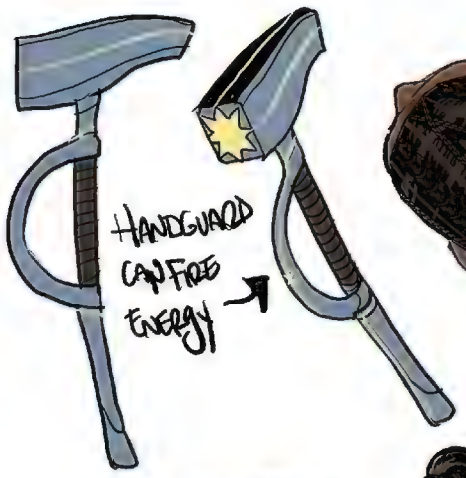
Taking into consideration the backstory Steve wrote on the character and the tone of the story, Pete brought thoughtful elements to the table, like referencing an X motif and the mechanics of the Nova guns. The final result of blending the aesthetics of Nova and Logan turned out to be a stunning success!

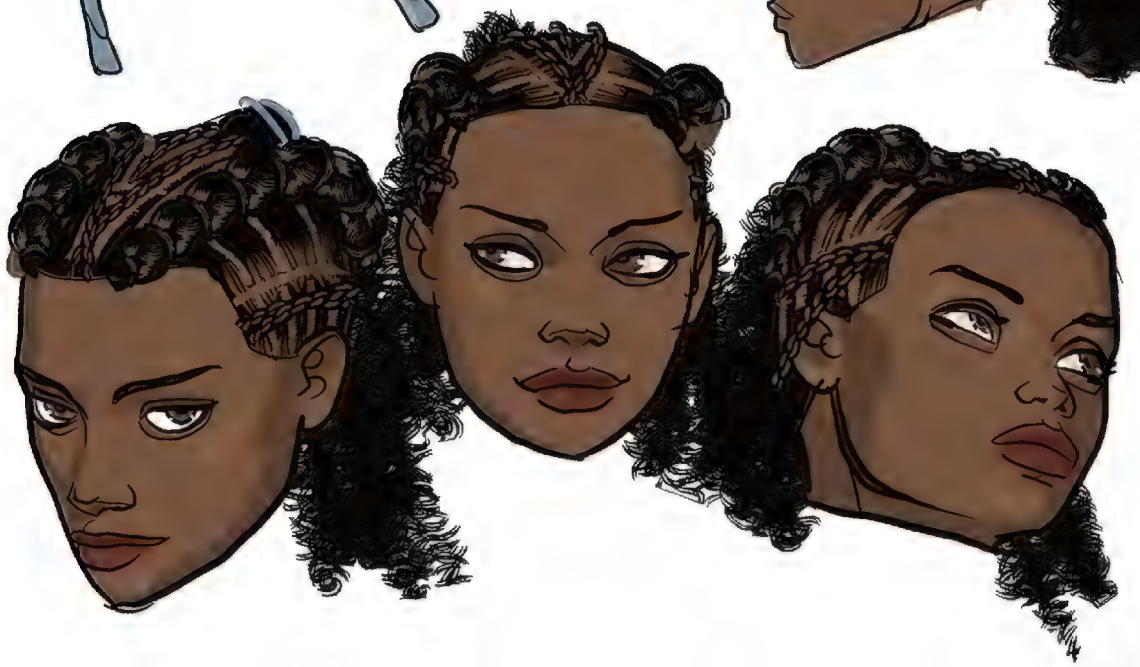
STARLORD
COSTUME DESIGN
BY PETE WOODS

For STARLORD, Steve imagined a woman of Wakandan and Mexican heritage, who survived a planetary disaster from an exploding sun during her youth. From that great tragedy, she took the path of a hero and created technologies that allow her access across the universe to become a true protector of stars. She has hundreds of orbital guard posts connected by folded-space doorways. With this Starpath, she can get to a stellar emergency in seconds.

We wanted to invoke the kind of power CAPTAIN MARVEL and THOR have, a figure who can go toe-to-toe with a god if need be. Her Starhammer, forged on Wakanda, can absorb energy, redirect it, or release it against whatever threat she faces.

Pete did a lot of versions, and we settled on the purple color scheme, adding stars to the black parts of the uniform to create a costume that's inspired by classic cosmic heroes who have come before her while still having a modern flare!



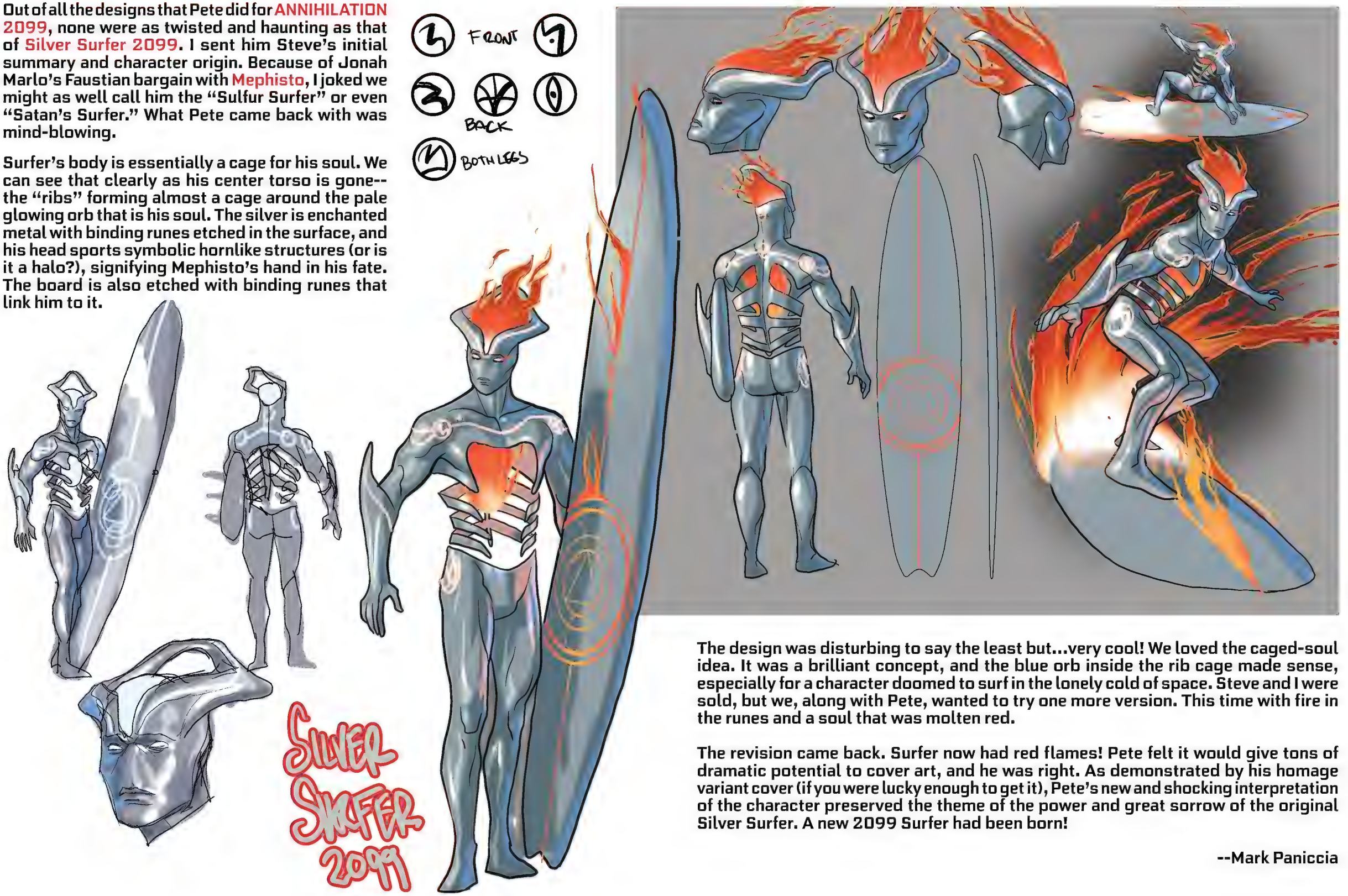


SILVER SURFER 2099 CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

Out of all the designs that Pete did for ANNIHILATION 2099, none were as twisted and haunting as that of Silver Surfer 2099. I sent him Steve's initial summary and character origin. Because of Jonah Marlo's Faustian bargain with Mephisto, I joked we might as well call him the "Sulfur Surfer" or even "Satan's Surfer." What Pete came back with was mind-blowing.

Surfer's body is essentially a cage for his soul. We can see that clearly as his center torso is gone--the "ribs" forming almost a cage around the pale glowing orb that is his soul. The silver is enchanted metal with binding runes etched in the surface, and his head sports symbolic hornlike structures (or is it a halo?), signifying Mephisto's hand in his fate. The board is also etched with binding runes that link him to it.



The design was disturbing to say the least but...very cool! We loved the caged-soul idea. It was a brilliant concept, and the blue orb inside the rib cage made sense, especially for a character doomed to surf in the lonely cold of space. Steve and I were sold, but we, along with Pete, wanted to try one more version. This time with fire in the runes and a soul that was molten red.

The revision came back. Surfer now had red flames! Pete felt it would give tons of dramatic potential to cover art, and he was right. As demonstrated by his homage variant cover (if you were lucky enough to get it), Pete's new and shocking interpretation of the character preserved the theme of the power and great sorrow of the original Silver Surfer. A new 2099 Surfer had been born!

--Mark Paniccia

DRACULA 2099

CHARACTER DESIGN
BY PETE WOODS

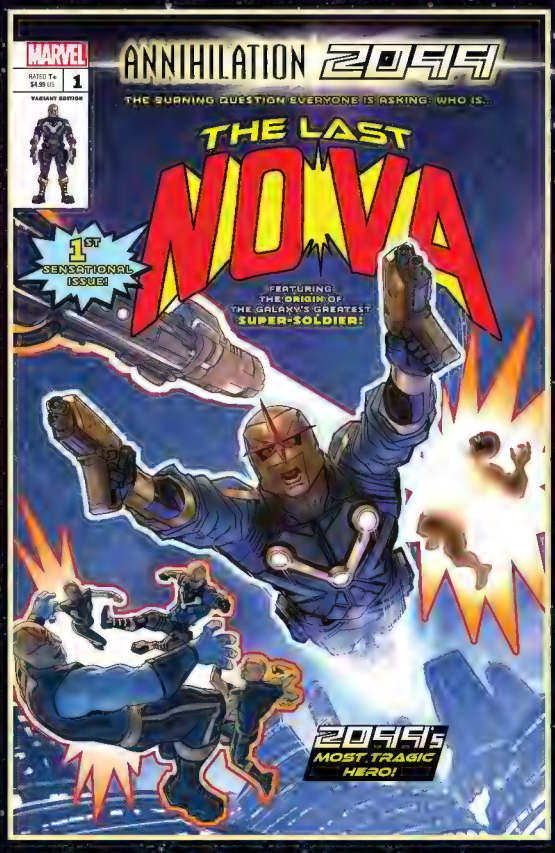
When we first added Dracula to the 2099 roster in MIGUEL O'HARA — SPIDER-MAN 2099: BEWARE, we thought it was cool and novel using a design that evoke the old '70s TOMB OF DRACULA version (and it was!). But when writer Steve Orlando sent him out into space in search of the new vampire homeworld at the end of the issue, it became apparent we had a big story that needed to be followed up on: What happens when Dracula goes cosmic?

The next 2099 projects were approved shortly after BEWARE. ANNIHILATION and CONQUEST were put on the docket, and we decided that Drac would have to be the big bad. We needed a new design that would ensure the Lord of the Vampires looked every bit as imposing and formidable as an intergalactic conqueror should. It had to evoke his classic roots while giving him an edge befitting of the 2099 era. Pete maintained the Count's signature cape with red lining but gave him armor with an aura of dark divinity.

But what's a conqueror with armor and a cape without a cool sword? Steve had the idea of an interlocking triple sword made from the blades of the three rulers of the planet Drac would conquer. Pete got it on the first try. And he also designed the new Darkhawk 2099, a powerful creature that will be an indispensable ally in Dracula's grand schemes.

We couldn't be more thrilled with Pete's final version. This Dracula is primed to leave an indelible mark as he prepares to unleash a vampiric apocalypse across the cosmos!

--Mark Paniccia



#1 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS

#1 2099 FRAME VARIANT BY
KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ

#2 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS

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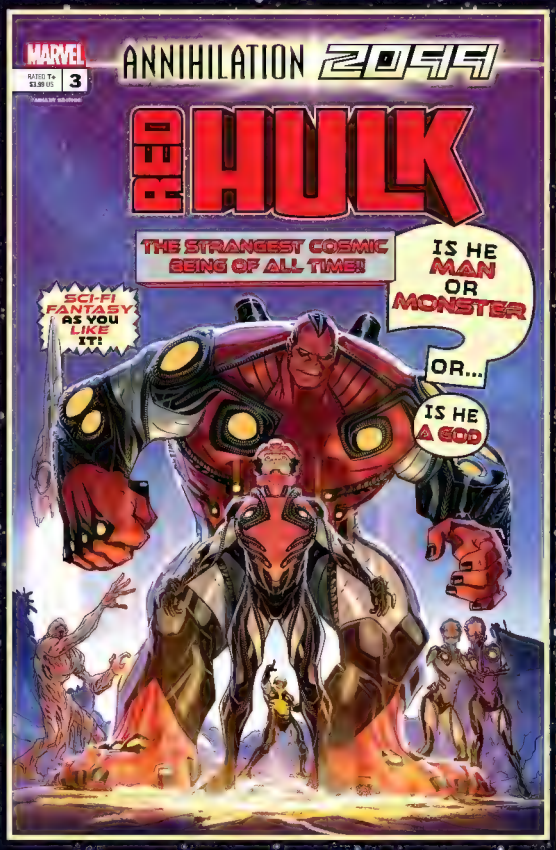

#3 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS

#3 2099 FRAME VARIANT BY
KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ

#4 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS

#4 2099 FRAME VARIANT BY
KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ

#5 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS

#5 2099 FRAME VARIANT BY
KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ

MARVEL COLLECTED EDITIONS

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MEET THE COSMIC HEROES OF THE YEAR 2099!

When a remote town on a far-off world is devastated by the ravenous, unforgiving **KNULL SET**, a gang of raiders and thieves obsessed with offering up all life to the darkness, a stranger arrives from the stars who answers to his own code. The sole survivor of **XANDAR** — the last **NOVA**! Wakandan tech goddess **STARLORD** guards the solar systems from villains like **QUASAR**, **THE LIVING STAR**! Ross Romero is the all-new **RED HULK**, whose cosmic strength and hyperspace jumps are fueled by the power primordial! Will that be enough to defeat **TERRAX**, **THE PLANET HUNTER**? A Faustian pact means Jonah Marlo must collect souls for his master as the **SILVER SURFER** of 2099! Plus: When **DRACULA** finds himself held captive on a hostile world, he encounters a **DARKHAWK**. They will need to team up to fight their oppressors, but is Dracula fighting to liberate the planet or to make it the first outpost in his new empire?

Collecting ***ANNIHILATION 2099 #1-5*** — by Steve Orlando, Ibraim Roberson, Dale Eaglesham, José Luis Soares, Pete Woods, Ario Anindito, Oren Junior, Neeraj Menon, Raúl Angulo and Jay David Ramos.

T+

MARVEL